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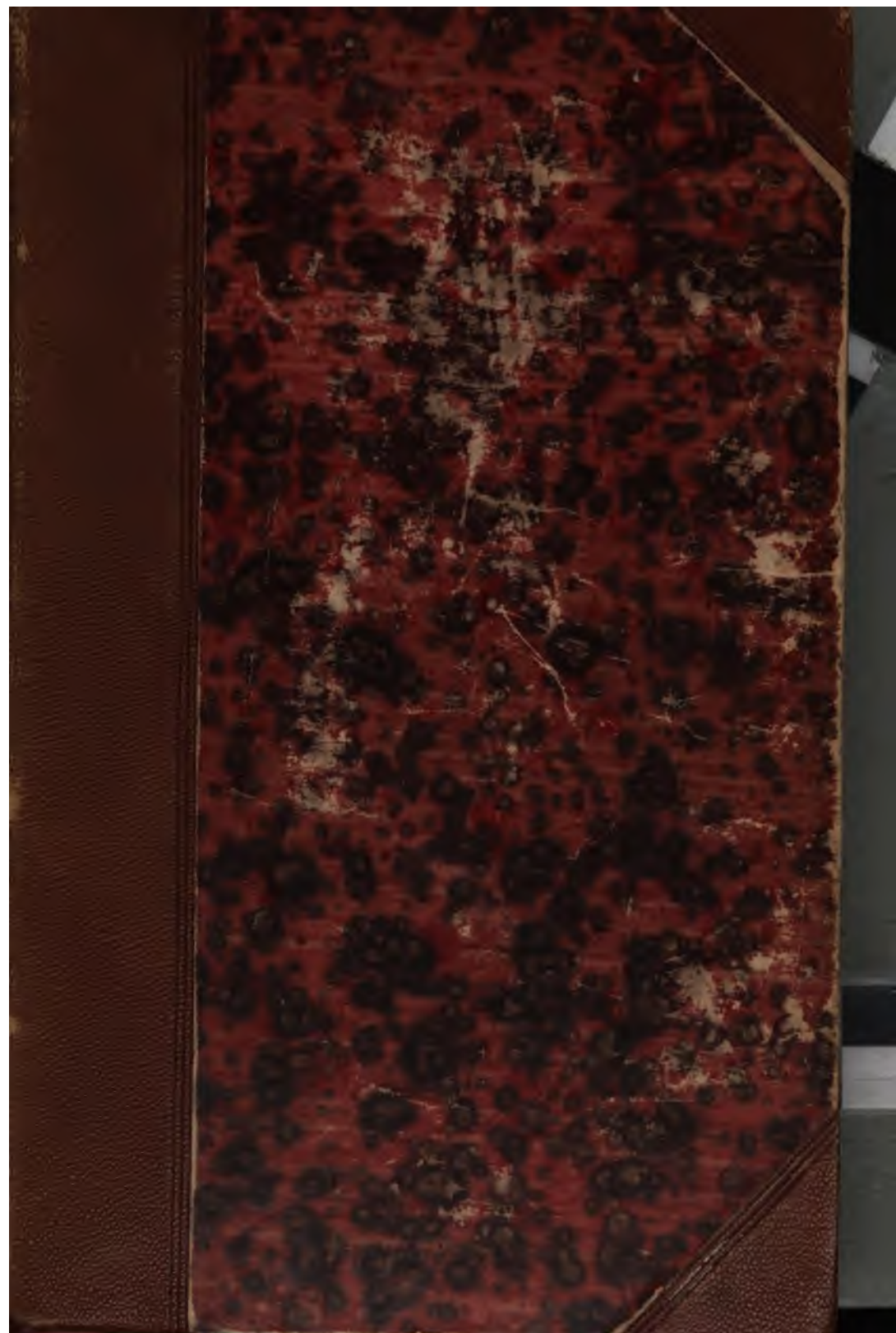
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(2 vol) PNL A



Lytton, Edward George ---

THE
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE

A Play

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"EUGENE ARAM," "THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII,"

"RIENZI," &c.

"Né pour les passions et pour le repentir."

VOLTAIRE, *Irene*, Act 5, Sc. 1.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON
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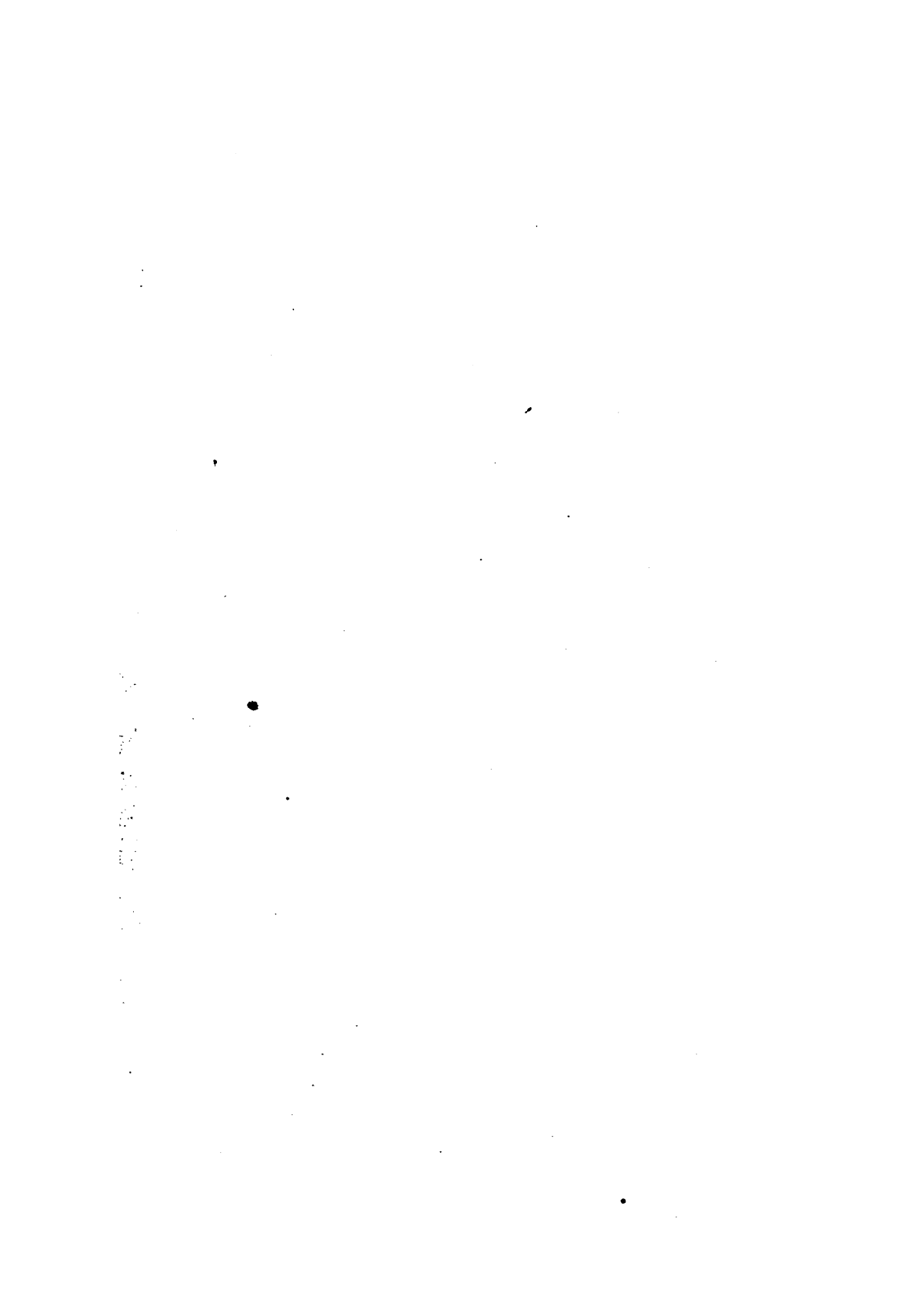
THOMAS C. SAVILL,

PRINTER,

107, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, CHARING CROSS.

DEDICATED
TO
W. C. MACREADY, ESQ.,
FOR SCIENCE AND GENIUS
UNSURPASSED IN HIS PROFESSION,
AND
FROM WHOM THE ARTISTS,
OF WHAT PROFESSION SOEVER,
MAY LEARN THAT
ART IS THE POETRY OF NATURE,
EXPRESSING
THE TRUE
THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF
THE IDEAL.

Albany, October, 1836.



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one, as in the delineation of adverse and opposing, passions, perhaps few subjects can be found more adapted to the skill of the dramatic poet than the love and the repentance, the fall and the atonement, of Madame de La Vallière. The strongest contrast of motives, the most tragic struggle of impulse and of principle, in the breast of a woman, is ever that which is created by the conflict of the Affections and the Conscience: Nor does the spectacle fail of a great and an impressive moral, if, after all the concessions and most of the triumphs of the first, the last becomes eventually the victor.

The mind of Madame de La Vallière was not of the highest order. With her the reasoning faculty was seated in the heart; but her very weakness, united and embellished as it was with so much genuine tenderness of sentiment and honest depth of emotion, ought to render her character yet more affecting on the stage. For pathos is rarely derived from the sternness of qualities purely intellectual; and we are led, by our sympathies with the infirmities of our nature, to conclusions that purify and exalt it. The philosophy of the drama is the metaphysics of the passions.

But if the character of Madame de La Vallière be dramatic, it is a task, I allow, of considerable difficulty, to concentrate the events of her life into the limits of a drama. The Probabilities require us to extend the period of action over the eight years of her historical career ; that sad, not sudden, but unceasing, progress from innocence to splendour—from the idolized to the deserted—from the deserted to the penitent and devout. In the interval between the second and third act more especially, the reader will tacitly supply the lapse of time that may seem to him required by such harmonies as Fiction, insensibly, as it were, establishes with Fact.

The time is past for discussing the propriety of the Unities, which even the dazzling example of the Author of Sardanapalus could not prove to be other than the sacrifice of Nature, from a misguided superstition for the Natural. The unity of character—the only one, indeed, on which Aristotle very peremptorily insists—is also the only one which all time and all criticism must recognise as essential and indispensable. When the Stagirite condemns Euripides for violating the unity of his character of Iphigenia, by ascribing to

her, in one sentence, sentiments wholly inapposite to, and irreconcilable with, the character which preceding sentences had portrayed, that great philosopher proved by the most illustrious example, what common sense might suffice to teach us—viz., that no poetry of expression can atone for that anomaly in poetical creation by which the creatures are made inconsistent with themselves. It may, however, be noticeable, that when fidelity to truth compels us to waive the minor unity of *time*, nicer and more delicate refinements of art are sometimes afforded us in our treatment of the unity of *character*. Maintaining the paramount qualities that individualize our creation, we are enabled subtly, and (to the uninvestigating) almost insensibly, to shew how we have served ourselves of the lapse of time, to modify them or develop. Macbeth in the fifth act is not the Macbeth of the first. But the bold, the ruthless, never the *hardened* tyrant, is precisely that which years and events would necessarily ripen, from the brave, but vacillating, the tender but ambitious thane, who requires omen and prediction, the urgings of hell, and the familiar inspirations of a feller and more powerful

mind, to shape the thought into the action, the "Dare not," to "I will."

In the Play now submitted to the reader, the supposed interval of time between the second and third act produces, though not perhaps very markedly, its effect on the character of Louis,—it brings (as that interval of time did in life) into more visible display his infirmer and vainer qualities, his gorgeous and sovereign selfishness, his morbid craving for amusement, (the mental vision aching beneath the glare of his own pomp,) the properties of a temperament restless, eager, susceptible, yet cold, with pampered energies and uncultivated resources. In the earlier portion of the play, Louis is not yet "The Great." He is the Louis of Fontainebleau,—not the Louis of Versailles,—in the flush of a brilliant youth, in the excitement of a first love.

It is a task not a little arduous to convey to the spectator or the reader the notion at once of what Louis the Fourteenth appears to posterity, and of what he seemed to his contemporaries. Nor would it perhaps be possible to effect the former object, and yet to give La Vallière all her real excuses for her weakness, if fortunately in representing Louis as

.

the lover we did not place him in the very position most favourable to his external graces, his felicity of phrase, his magnificence of taste, his softness of feeling disguising his want of heart, and that peculiar royalty of thought and sentiment, which had the twofold advantage of rendering homely and plebeian those who rejected, bombastic and ridiculous those who adopted, the imitation.

The Duke de Lauzun,* who, in the judgment of La Bruyère, was to bequeath, in himself, an enigma to posterity, has left to our more distant examination a character sufficiently intelligible. Remarkable talents enabled him to cheat with grandeur, and to be convicted of fraud in an attitude of grace. He never was more admired than in what were called his 'misfortunes!' In other words, the merited reverses of a strong-minded rogue appeared in him but the sufferings of a philosophical hero. His genius was his destruction. Daring, versatile, sarcastic, sceptical, every thing his fate presented to him, whether of obstruction or ad-

* Lauzun was properly but a Count at the date of the Play. But as he is so well known by his latter and higher title, I have ventured on the slight anachronism.

vancement, was a trifle to be toyed with to-day, and thrown away to-morrow. With all his general lack of principle, he betrayed, it is true, occasional feelings of generosity and glimpses of an original nobleness. But I suspect that he himself would have esteemed the best part of his nature to be its weakest and most foolish. In this Play, the Duke de Lauzun is represented in that view of his multiform character which seemed to me most in keeping with the position he assumed towards both Montespan and La Vallière, and most in harmony with the grouping of my own composition. But whoever performs the part will forgive me for observing, that whatever it contains of comic must be regarded as a sign of the easy complacency with which a bold and able *intrigant* moves among things and persons that he deems his puppets, trifling, as it were, with a part beneath his real genius. His gaiety is not animal, but intellectual ; —at least, such is my conception of it.

In the character of Bragelone is embodied whatever in the Play pretends to the Heroic,—it is an Episode that introduces the Epic into a Court Poem. In this character I have used my licence

of idealizing the Realities. The Bragelone of Biography died of a broken heart after Madame de La Vallière became the victim of the King. In reviving, I have dared to re-create him. In his character I seek to portray and individualize the old, chivalric, high-thoughted, and high-spirited race upon whose graves rose the reckless, profligate, and brilliant generation of Louis the Fourteenth. That splendid Sovereign, whose natural talents were perhaps greater than we are now willing to acknowledge, confirmed the form of the Monarchy, but destroyed the soul of the Aristocracy. Chivalry was the Mother of the Court, and died of her *accouchement*. Bragelone stands alone—the last of his race. His only weakness—the only infirmity which reduces him from our respect to our sympathy—is in his misplaced, but gallant and faithful love. Removed from this influence, I have wished him never to appear, but to dwarf the proportions of the Falsely-Great; thus the sarcastic Lauzun beside him sinks into the slanderous jester; the haughty Louis himself, into the abashed and superstitious criminal. But, brought under the influence of his passion, the sternness of Bragelone

is ever invaded by his softness. He is here again meant to be faithful to the age he represents—to the spirit of its knightly and crusader-like Romance. Even his adoption of the cowl is in harmony with the ancient religious character—with the Ideal of the old Franc and Germanic race, in which the warrior was the germ of the monk, and Life laid its trophies on the altar, and sought its resting-place in the cell. Where the character of Bragelone most takes its leaven from the times on which he has fallen, is in his actual experience of mankind. His dim prophecies to the King—his soliloquy on life towards the close of the fifth act—his definition of the true religion of the cloister, partake of the philosophy we form not in the closet, but in the world. Nor would these sentiments, I allow, be appropriate to Bragelone, regarded as the mere soldier; but they are of the wisdom which sorrow and disappointment may be supposed to bring to a powerful and reflective mind, which the rough contact of the world, and the actual interchange of various opinions with various men, have released from the prejudices of class and sect: and we

must remember that the sentiments he utters, as to the effect of the wars of Louis, and the real uses of the monastery, were not heresies unbrought at that day even among loyal subjects and orthodox Catholics.

I know not how far my feeble execution of this character has fallen short of the conception: I know still less how far it will produce upon the stage the more subtle and the higher effects it is intended to convey;—Alas! the Plot of the Drama does not introduce it sufficiently often, to render it worthy the acceptance of that great actor who never mistakes the conception of an Author, and yet who invariably exalts it.

May I now be permitted to pass from the Personages of this Drama to something between an explanation and an apology for my general treatment of the subject I have selected, and of the times I have portrayed. It seemed to me that subject and time alike furnished materials for the graver Comedy, no less than for the development of tragic emotions. The intrigues, the pageants, the hollowness and servility of the Court of France, the philosophy embodied by a Rochefou-

cault, the manners delineated by a Dangeau, the morality extolled by a Genlis, are not to be approached by epic declamation ; they are only brought nearer to us by the glass of an easy satire, which defines the object by diminishing, not exaggerating, the proportions which our human vision is too apt to enlarge.

The beings of Versailles were, for the most part, men to whom passions (which *are* tragedy) were unknown. It was through humours (which *are* comedy) that they represented the form and the spirit of the society they created, working out, through gaiety, a solemn and a lasting moral. If this, my impression of that scene, and that time, be true, I trust I shall be pardoned, not only for the tone of the lighter portions of the play, but for the use of a diction, in such portions, which will probably sound a little prosaic to ears accustomed to the florid prettiness of modern verse, or attuned to the elaborate quaintness of the elder dramatists. To thoughts and to persons that belong to prose, belongs prosaic expression. Where the subject of itself rises into poetry, I have given whatever advantage of poetical language it is in

the power of one whom the Muse has long deserted, to command.

I now dismiss this experiment to its fate, prefaced by these (I fear tedious) observations, which may prove at least that it is not without something of preliminary study that I have ventured to diverge into a new path of that great realm of fiction, which grants indeed to indolence the shade and the fountain, but guards the fruit and the treasure, as the just monopoly of labour.*

E. L. B.

Paris, 21st December, 1835.

* The necessities of poetical justice have obliged me to an anachronism in the punishment of Madame de Montespan. In reality, if longer deferred, it was yet more strikingly retributive than it appears in the play. Betraying a friend, by a friend she was betrayed; the nun was avenged by the devotee; and what Montespan was to La Vallière, Maintenon was to Montespan. I should also add that the concentration and climax of interest required on the stage has obliged me to introduce Louis in the *last* scene. In my first outline of the Plot, and more in accordance with strict historical data, it was in the hotel of Madame de la Vallière (when she announced her intention of taking the veil) that the King acted that part, and uttered those sentiments which I have ascribed to him in the convent of the Carmelites.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Play (with the above Preface) was written in the autumn and winter of 1835. It was submitted to no other opinion than that of Mr. Macready, with whom the Author had the honour of a personal acquaintance ; and who, on perusal, was obligingly anxious for its performance at Drury Lane. The manager of that theatre wished, naturally perhaps, to see the manuscript before he hazarded the play ; the Author (perhaps no less naturally) declined a condition from a manager, which was precisely of that nature which no author, of moderate reputation, concedes to a publisher. A writer can have but little self-respect, who does not imagine, in any new experiment in literature, that no risk can be greater than his own. Subsequently, Mr. Morris, of the Haymarket Theatre, was desirous of the right of performing the Play, and complied at once with the terms proposed. A difficulty with respect to the requisite actors obliged the Author, however, to break off the negotiation, and to decide upon confining the publication of his Drama to the press. The earnest and generous zeal of Mr. Macready, with the very prompt and liberal accedence, on the part of Mr. Osbaldiston, the present manager of Covent Garden, to the conditions of the Author, have induced him, however, to alter his intention, and to rank himself with the Neophytes of that great class of writers whose rights, some years ago, when he little thought he should ever be a humble member of so illustrious a fraternity, it was his fortune to protect and to extend.

Albany, October, 1836.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Louis the Fourteenth.

The Duke de Lauzun,

Count de Grammont,

Marquis de Montespan,

} (*Courtiers.*)

The Marquis de Bragelone (*betrothed to Mademoiselle
de la Vallière.*)

Bertrand (*the Armourer.*)

Courtiers, Gentleman of the Chamber, Priests, &c.

Madame de La Vallière.

Mademoiselle (afterwards Duchess) de La Vallière.

Madame de Montespan.

The Queen.

Abbess.

Nuns, Ladies, Maids of Honour, &c.

PROLOGUE.

To paint the Past, yet in the Past portray
Such shapes as seem dim prophets of To-Day ;—
To trace, through all the garish streams of art,
Nature's deep fountain—woman's silent heart ;—
On the stirr'd surface of the soften'd mind
To leave the print of holier truths behind ;—
And, while through joy or grief—through calm or strife,
Bound the wild Passions on the course of Life,
To share the race—yet point the proper goal,
And make the Affections preachers to the Soul ;—
Such is the aim with which a gaudier age
Now woos the brief revival of the stage ;—
Such is the moral, though unseen it flows,
In Lauzun's wiles and soft La Vallière's woes ;
Such the design our Author boldly drew,
And, losing boldness, now submits to YOU.

Not new to climes where dreamy FABLE dwells—
That magic Prospero of the Isle of Spells—
Now first the wanderer treads, with anxious fear,
The fairy land whose flowers allured him here. °
Dread is the court our alien pleads before ;
Your verdict makes his exile from the shore.
Yet, ev'n if banish'd, let him think, in pride,
He trod the path with no unhallowed guide ;
Chasing the light, whose face, though veil'd and dim,
Perchance a meteor, seem'd a star to him,
Hoping the ray might rest where TRUTH appears
Beneath her native well—your smiles and tears.

When a wide waste, to Law itself unknown,
Lay that fair world the DRAMA calls its own ;

PROLOGUE.

When all might riot on the mines of Thought,
And Genius starv'd amidst the wealth it wrought;
He who now ventures on the haunted soil
For nobler labourers won the rights of toil,
And his the boast—that Fame now rests in ease
Beneath the shade of her own laurel trees.
Yes—if, with all the critic on their brow,
His clients once, have grown his judges now,
And watch, like spirits on the Elysian side,
Their brother ferried o'er the Stygian tide,
To where, on souls untried, austere sit
(The triple Minos)—Gallery—Boxes—Pit—
'Twill soothe to think, howe'er the verdict end,
In every rival he hath served a friend.

But well we know, and, knowing, we rejoice,
The mightiest Critic is the PUBLIC VOICE.
Aw'd, yet resigned, our novice trusts in you,
Hard to the practised, gentle to the new.
Whate'er the anxious strife of hope and fear,
He asks no favour—let the stage be clear.
If from the life his shapes the Poet draws,
In man's deep breast lie all the critic's laws:
If not, in vain the nicely-pois'd design,
Vain the cold music of the laboured line,
Before our eyes behold the living rules;—
The soul has instincts wiser than the schools!
Yours is the Great Tribunal of the Heart,
And touch'd Emotion makes the test of Art.
Judges august!—the same in every age,
While Passions weave the sorcery of the Stage,—
While Nature's sympathies are Art's best laws,—
To you a stranger has referred his cause:—
If the soft tale he woos the soul to hear
Bequeaths the moral, while it claims the tear,
Each gentler thought, to faults in others shown,
He calls in court—a pleader for his own.

THE
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Time—sun-set. On the foreground an old Chateau ; beyond, Vineyards and Woods, which present, through their openings, Views of a River, reflecting the sun-set. At a distance, the turrets of the Convent of the Carmelites.

Madame and Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Tis our last eve, my mother !

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Thou regrett'st it,
My own Louise ! albeit the court invites thee—
A court beside whose glories, dull and dim
The pomp of eastern kings, by poets told ;
A court——

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In which I shall not see my mother !

Nor these old walls, in which, from every stone,
 Childhood speaks eloquent of happy years ;
 Nor vines and woods, which bade me love the earth,
 Nor yonder spires, which raised that love to God!—

(The vesper bell tolls.)

The vesper bell!—my mother, when, once more,
 I hear from those grey towers that holy chime,
 May thy child's heart be still as full of Heaven,
 And callous to all thoughts of earth, save those
 Which mirror Eden in the face of Home !

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Do I not know thy soul?—through every snare
 My gentle dove shall 'scape with spotless plumes.
 Alone in courts, I have no fear for *thee* ;—
 Some natures take from Innocence the lore
 Experience teaches ; and their delicate leaves,
 Like the soft plant, shut out all wrong, and shrink
 From vice by instinct, as the wise by knowledge :
 And such is thine ! *My* voice thou wilt not hear,
 But Thought shall whisper where my voice would
 warn,
 And Conscience be thy mother and thy guide !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh, may I merit all thy care, and most
 Thy present trust!—Thou'lt write to me, my mother,
 And tell me of thyself : amidst the court

My childhood's images shall rise. Be kind
To the poor cotters in the wood ;—alas,
They'll miss me in the winter !—and my birds ?—
Thy hand will feed them ?——

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And that noble heart
That loves thee as my daughter should be loved—
The gallant Bragelone ?*—should I hear
Some tidings Fame forgets—if in the din
Of camps I learn thy image makes his solace,
Shall I not write of *him* ?—

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*with indifference.*)

His name will breathe
Of home and friendship ;—yes !—

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Of nought beside ?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, why so pressing ?—let me change the theme.
The King !—you have seen him ;—is he, as they
say,
So fair—so stately ?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, in truth, my daughter,

* The author has, throughout this play, availed himself of the poetical licence to give to the name of Bragelone the Italian pronunciation, and to accent the final *e*.

A king that wins the awe he might command.
Splendid in peace, and terrible in war ;
Wise in the council—gentle in the bower.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Strange, that so often through mine early dreams
A royal vision flitted ;—a proud form,
Upon whose brow nature had written ‘ empire ;’
While, on the lip,—love, smiling, wrapt in sunshine
The charmed world that was its worshipper—
A form like that which clothed the gods of old,
Lured from Olympus by some mortal maid,—
Youthful it seemed—but with ambrosial youth ;
And beautiful—but half as beauty were
A garb too earthly for a thing divine :—
Was it not strange, my mother ?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A child’s fancy,

Breathed into life by thy brave father’s soul.
He taught thee, in thy cradle yet, to lisp
Thy sovereign’s name in prayer—and still together,
In thy first infant creed, were linked the lessons
‘ To honour God, and love the king ;’ it was
A part of that old knightly faith of France
Which made it half religion to be loyal.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

It might be so. I have preserved the lesson,

Ev'n with too weak a reverence.—Yet, 'tis strange !
A dream so oft renewed !—

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Here comes thy lover !
Thou wilt not blame him if his lips repeat
The question mine have asked ? Alphonso, wel-
come !

SCENE II.

Bragelone, Madame and Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

BRAGELONE.

My own Louise !—ah ! dare I call thee so ?
War never seemed so welcome ! since we part,
Since the soft sunshine of thy smiles must fade
From these dear scenes, it soothes, at least, to
think

I shall not linger on the haunted spot,
And feel, forlorn amidst the gloom of absence,
How dark is all once lighted by thine eyes.

[Madame de la Vallière retires into the chateau.]

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Can friendship flatter thus ?—or wouldst thou train
My ear betimes to learn the courtier's speech ?

BRAGELONE.

Louise ! Louise ! this is our parting hour :
Me war demands—and thee the court allures.
In such an hour, the old romance allowed
The maid to soften from her coy reserve,
And her true knight, from some kind words, to take
Hope's talisman to battle !—Dear Louise !
Say, canst thou love me ?—

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sir !—I !—love !—methinks
It is a word that——

BRAGELONE.

Sounds upon thy lips
Like 'land' upon the mariner's, and speaks
Of home and rest after a stormy sea.
Sweet girl, my youth has passed in camps ;
and war
Hath somewhat scathed my manhood ere my time.
Our years are scarce well-mated : the soft spring
Is thine, and o'er my summer's waning noon
Grave autumn creeps. Thou say'st 'I flatter !'—
well,
Love taught me first the golden words in which
The honest heart still coins its massive ore.
But fairer words, from falser lips, will soon
Make *my* plain courtship rude.—Louise ! thy sire

Betrothed us in thy childhood : I have watched thee
 Bud into virgin May, and in thy youth
 Have seemed to hoard my own !—I think of *thee*,
 And I am youthful still ! The passionate prayer—
 The wild idolatry—the purple light
 Bathing the cold earth from a Hebe's urn ;—
 Yea, all the soul's divine excess which youth
 Claims as its own, came back when first I loved thee !
 And yet so well I love, that if thy heart
 Recoil from mine,—if but one single wish,
 A shade more timid than the fear which ever
 Blends trembling twilight with the starry hope
 Of maiden dreams—would start thee from our union,
 Speak, and my suit is tongueless !—

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O, my lord !

If to believe all France's chivalry
 Boasts not a nobler champion,—if to feel
 Proud in your friendship, honoured in your trust,—
 If this be love, and I have known no other,
 Why then—

BRAGELONE.

Why then, thou lov'st me !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Shall I say it ?

I feel 'twere to deceive him ! Is it love ?

Love!—no, it *is* not love!—(*Aloud.*) My noble lord,
As yet I know not all mine own weak heart ;
I would not pain thee, yet would not betray.
Legend and song have often painted love,
And my heart whispers not the love which should be
The answer to thine own :—thou hadst best forget
me !

BRAGELONE.

Forget !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am not worthy of thee !

BRAGELONE.

Hold!—

My soul is less heroic than I deemed it.
Perchance my passion asks too much from thine,
And would forestal the fruit ere yet the blossom
Blushes from out the coy and maiden leaves.
No ! let *me* love ; and say, perchance the time
May come when *thou* wilt bid me *not* forget thee.
Absence may plead my cause ; it hath some magic ;
I fear not contrast with the courtier-herd ;
And thou art not Louise if thou art won
By a smooth outside and a honeyed tongue.
No ! when thou seest these hunters after power,
These shadows, minioned to the royal sun,—
Proud to the humble, servile to the great,—
Perchance thou'lt learn how much one honest heart,

That never wronged a friend or shunn'd a foe,—
How much the old hereditary knighthood,
Faithful to God, to glory, and to love,
Outweighs an universe of cringing courtiers !
Louise, I ask no more !—I bide my time !

Re-enter Madame de la Vallière from the chateau.

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The twilight darkens. Art thou now, Alphonso,
Convinced her heart is such as thou wouldst have it ?

BRAGELONE.

It is a heavenly tablet—but my name
Good angels have not writ there !

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, as yet,
Love wears the mask of friendship : she must love
thee.

BRAGELONE (*half incredulously.*)

Think'st thou so ?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, be sure !

BRAGELONE.

I'll think so too.

(*Turns to Mademoiselle de la Vallière.*)

Bright lady of my heart !—(*Aside.*) By Heaven ! 'tis true !

The rose grows richer on her cheek, like hues
That, in the silence of the virgin dawn,
Predict, in blushes, light that glads the earth.
Her mother spoke aright ;—ah, yes, she loves me !
Bright lady of my heart, farewell ! and yet
Again—farewell !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Honour and health be with you !

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, my Louise, when warriors wend to battle,
The maid they serve grows half a warrior too ;
And does not blush to bind on mailed bosoms
The banner of her colours.

BRAGELONE.

Dare I ask it ?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A soldier's child could never blush, my Lord,
To belt so brave a breast ;—and yet,—well, wear it.
(*Placing her scarf round Bragelone's hauberk.*)

BRAGELONE.

Ah ! add for thy sake.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

For the sake of one

Who honours worth, and ne'er since Bayard fell,
Have banners flaunted o'er a knight more true
To France and Fame ;—

BRAGELONE.

And love ?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, hush, my Lord ;

I said not that.

BRAGELONE.

But France and Fame shall say it !

Yes, if thou hear'st men speak of Bragelone,
If proudest chiefs confess he bore him bravely,
Come life, come death, his glory shall be thine,
And all the light it borrowed from thine eyes,
Shall gild thy name. Ah ! scorn not *then* to say,
'He loved me well !' How well ! God shield
and bless thee ? [Exit Bragelone.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Most worthy love ! *why* can I love him not ?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Peace to his gallant heart ! when next we meet,
May I have gained a son—and thou——

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*quickly.*)

My mother,
This night let every thought be given to *thee* !

14 THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE. [ACT I.

Beautiful scene, farewell!—farewell, my home!
And thou, grey convent, whose inspiring chime
Measures the hours with prayer, that morn and eve
Life may ascend the ladder of the angels,
And climb to heaven! serene retreats, farewell!
And now, my mother!—no! some hours must yet
Pass ere our parting.

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Cheer thee, my Louise!
And let us now within; the dews are falling—

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And I forgot how ill thy frame may bear them.
Pardon!—within, within!—

*(Stopping short, and gazing fondly on Madame de
la Vallière)*

Your hand, dear mother!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

*An old Armoury, of the heavy French Architecture pre-
ceding the time of Francis the First, in the Castle of
Bragelone.*

Bertrand, the armourer, employed in polishing a sword.

BERTRAND.

There now! I think this blade will scarcely shame

My gallant master's hand; it was the weapon,
So legends say, with which the old Lord Rodolph
Slew, by the postern gate, his lady's leman!
Oh, we're a haughty race—we old French lords;
Our honour is unruined as our steel,
And, when provoked, as ruthless!

Enter Bragelone.

BRAGELONE.

Ah, old Bertrand!

Why, your brave spirit, 'mid these coats of mail,
Grows young again. So! this, then, is the sword
You'd have me wear. God wot! a tranchant blade,
Not of the modern fashion.

BERTRAND.

My good lord,
Yourself are scarcely of the modern fashion.
They tell me, that to serve one's king for nothing,
To deem one's country worthier than one's self,
To hold one's honour not a phrase to swear by,—
They tell me, now, all *this* is out of fashion.
Come, take the sword, my lord!—you have your
father's
Stout arm and lordly heart: they're out of fashion,
And yet you keep the one—come, take the other.

BRAGELONE.

Why you turn satirist!

BERTRAND.

Satirist ! what is that ? .

BRAGELONE.

Satirists, my friend, are men who speak the truth.
That courts may say—they do not know the fashion!
Satire on Vice is Wit's revenge on fools
That slander Virtue!—How now! look ye, Bertrand!
Methinks there is a notch here.

BERTRAND.

Ay, my lord ;
I would not grind it out ;—’twas here the blade
Clove through the helmet, ev’n unto the chin,
Of that irreverent and most scoundrel Dutchman
Who stabbed you, through your hauberk-joints—
what time
You placed your breast before the king.

BRAGELONE.

Hence, ever
Be it believed, that, in his hour of need,
A king's sole safeguard are his subject's hearts !
Ha, ha ! good sword ! that was a famous stroke !
Thou didst brave deeds that day, thou quaint old
servant,
Though now—thou'rt not the fashion !

BERTRAND.

Bless that look,

And that glad laugh ! they bring me back the day
When first old Bertrand armed you for the wars,—
A fair-faced stripling ; yet, beshrew my heart,
You spurred that field before the bearded chins,
And saved the gallant Lord La Vallière's standard,
And yet you were a stripling then.

BRAGELONE.

La Vallière !

The very name goes dancing through my veins.
Bertrand, look round the armoury ! Is there nought
I wore that first campaign ? Nay, nay ! no matter !
I wear the *name within* me. Harkye, Bertrand !
We're not so young as then we were : when next
We meet, old friend, we both will end our labours,
And find some nook, amidst yon antique trophies,
Wherein to hang this idle mail.

BERTRAND.

Huzza !

The village dames speak truth—my Lord will marry !
And I shall nurse, in these old withered arms,
Another boy—for France another hero.
Ha, ha ! I am so happy.

BRAGELONE.

Good old man !

Why this is like my father's hall—since thus
My father's servants love me !

BERTRAND.

All must love you !

BRAGELONE.

All !—let me think so !

(Bugle sounds.)

Hark, the impatient bugle !

I hear the neigh of my exultant charger,
Breathing from far the glorious air of war.
Give me the sword !

(Enter Servant, with a letter.)

Her mother's hand !—‘ Louise,
Arrived at court, writes sadly, and amidst
The splendour pines for home,’—I knew she would !
My own Louise !—‘ Speaks much of the King's
goodness ;’—

Goodness to her !—that thought shall give the King
A tenfold better soldier !—‘ From thy friend,
Who trusts ere long to hail thee as her son.’
Her son !—a blessed name ! These lines shall be
My heart's true shield, and ward away each weapon.
He who shall wed Louise has conquered Fate,
And smiles at earthly foes !—Again the bugle !
Give me your hand, old man ! My fiery youth
Went not to battle with so blithe a soul
As now burns in me.—So ! she pines for home—
I knew she would—I knew it ! Farewell, Bertrand !

[Exit Bragelone.]

BERTRAND.

Oh ! there'll be merry doings in the hall
When my dear lord returns ! A merry wedding,
And then—and then—oh, such a merry christening !
How well I fancy his grave manly face
Brightening upon his first-born. (*As he is going*)

Re-enter Bragelone.

BRAGELONE.

Ho, there ! Bertrand !
One charge I had forgot :—Be sure they train
The woodbine richly round the western wing—
My mother's old apartment. Well, man ! well !
Do you not hear me ?

BERTRAND.

You, my lord ! the woodbine ?

BRAGELONE.

Yes ; see it duly done. I know she loves it ;
It clammers round her lattice. I would not
Have one thing absent she could miss.

Remember !

[Exit Bragelone.]

BERTRAND.

And this is he whom Warriors call ' the Stern !'
The dove's heart beats beneath that lion breast.
Pray Heaven his lady may deserve him ! Oh,

What news for my good dame !—i'faith, I'm glad
I was the first to learn the secret. So !
This year a wife—next year a boy ! I'll teach
The young rogue how his father clove the Dutch-
man
Down to the chin ! Ha, ha ! old Bertrand now
Will be of use again on winter nights,—
I know he'll be the picture of his father !

[*Exit Bertrand.*

SCENE IV.

An Ante-chamber in the Palace of Fontainebleau.

Enter Lauzun and Grammont, at opposite doors.

LAUZUN.

Ah, Count, good day !—Were you at court last
night ?

GRAMMONT.

Yes ; and the court is grown the richer by
A young new beauty.

LAUZUN.

So !—her name ?

GRAMMONT.

La Vallière !

LAUZUN.

Ay, I have heard ;—a maid of honour ?

GRAMMONT.

Yes.

The women say she's plain.

LAUZUN.

The women ! oh,
The case it is that's plain—*she* must be lovely !

GRAMMONT.

The dear, kind, gossips of the court, declare
The pretty novice hath conceived a fancy—
A wild, romantic, innocent, strange fancy—
For our young King ; a girlish love, like that
Told of in fairy tales : she saw his picture,
Sighed to the canvas, murmured to the colours,
And—fell in love with carmine and gambouge.

LAUZUN.

The simple dreamer ! Well, she saw the king ?

GRAMMONT.

And while she saw him, like a rose, when May

Breathes o'er its bending bloom, she seemed to
shrink
Into her modest self, and a low sigh
Shook blushes (sweetest rose-leaves !) from her
beauty.

LAUZUN.

You paint it well.

GRAMMONT.

And ever since that hour
She bears the smiling malice of her comrades
With an unconscious and an easy sweetness ;
As if alike *her* virtue and *his* greatness
Made love impossible:—so, down the stream
Of purest thought, her heart glides on to danger.

LAUZUN.

Did Louis note her ?—Has he heard the gossip ?

GRAMMONT.

Neither, methinks : his Majesty is cold.
The art of pomp, and not the art of love,
Tutors his skill—Augustus more than Ovid.

LAUZUN.

The time will come ! The King as yet is young,
Flush'd with the novelty of sway, and fired
With the great dream of cutting Dutchmen's throats :
A tiresome dream—the poets call it ' Glory.'

GRAMMONT.

So much the better,—'tis one rival less ;
The handsome King would prove a dangerous
suitor.

LAUZUN.

Oh, hang the danger !—He must have a mistress ;
'Tis an essential to a court : how many
Favours, one scarcely likes to ask a King,
One flatters from a King's inamorata !
We courtiers fatten on the royal vices ;
And, while the King lives chaste, he cheats, he
robs me
Of ninety-nine per cent !

GRAMMONT.

Ha, ha !—Well, Duke,
We meet again to-night. You join the revels ?
Till then, adieu !

LAUZUN.

Adieu, dear Count !

[Exit Grammont.]

The King
Must have a mistress : I must lead that mistress.
The times are changed !—'twas by the sword and
spear

Our fathers bought ambition—vulgar butchers !
 But now our wit's our spear—intrigue our armour ;
 The ante-chamber is our field of battle ;
 And the best hero is—the cleverest rogue !

[*Exit Lauzun.*

SCENE V.

Night—the Gardens of the Fontainebleau, brilliantly illuminated with coloured lamps—Fountains, vases, and statues in perspective—A pavilion in the background—to the right, the Palace of the Fontainebleau, illuminated.*

Enter Courtiers, Ladies, &c.

A Dance.

Then enter Grammont and Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

A brilliant scene !

* The effect of the scene should be principally made by jets-d'eau, waterfalls, &c.

GRAMMONT.

And see ! to make it brighter,
That most divine, diverting, pompous Marquis—

LAUZUN.

Who has but one idea, and two phrases !

GRAMMONT.

The one idea—that he is a marquis !
And the two phrases ?

LAUZUN.

Let himself inform you.

Enter the Marquis de Montespan, ridiculously over-dressed.

MONTESPAN.

My Lords, I'm charmed to see you !—How's your
health,
Dear Count ?

GRAMMONT.

But poorly, Sir.

MONTESPAN.

I'm in despair !

And yours ?

LAUZUN.

Most flourishing !

MONTESPAN.

I'm charmed—enraptured !

LAUZUN.

Why don't you bring your wife to court, dear
Marquis ?

MONTESPAN.

My wife !—(what's that to him ?)—she hates the
pomp,
And stays at home to think of *me*—and bless
The fate that made her—

LAUZUN.

Married to a Marquis !

MONTESPAN.

Precisely so !

LAUZUN.

And such a Marquis !

MONTESPAN.

Oh !

You are too bad !—have done !

LAUZUN.

The very words
Your lovely lady said when last I saw her !

MONTESPAN.

She copies me—'tis natural !—

GRAMMONT.

Hist !—the King !

Enter Louis, followed by Courtiers, &c.

LOUIS.

Fair eve and pleasant revels to you all !
Ah, Duke !—a word with you !

(Courtiers give way.)

Thou hast seen, my Lauzun,
The new and fairest floweret of our court,
This youngest of the graces—sweet La Vallière,
Blushing beneath the world's admiring eyes ?

LAUZUN *(aside.)*

(So, so !—he's caught !) Your Majesty speaks warmly ;
Your praise is just—and grateful—

LOUIS.

Grateful ?

LAUZUN.

Ay.

Know you not, Sire, it is the jest, among

The pretty prattlers of the royal chamber,
That this young Dian of the woods has found
Endymion in a king,—a summer dream,
Bright, but with vestal fancies !—scarcely love,
But that wild interval of hopes and fears
Through which the child glides, trembling, to the
 woman ?

LOUIS.

Blest thought ! Oh what a picture of delight
Your words have painted !—

LAUZUN.

While we speak, behold,
Through yonder alleys, with her sister planets,
Your moonlight beauty gleams.

LOUIS.

Tis she !—this shade
Shall hide us !—quick—

[*Enters one of the bosquets.*

LAUZUN (*following him.*)

I trust my creditors
Will grow the merrier from this night's adventure !

Enter Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and Maids of Honour.

FIRST MAID.

How handsome looks the Duke de Guiche to-
 night !

SECOND MAID.

Well! to my taste, the graceful Grammont bears
The bell from all!—

THIRD MAID.

But, then, that charming Lauzun
Has so much wit!

FIRST MAID.

And which, of all these gallants,
May please the fair La Vallière most?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In truth
I scarcely marked them; when the King is by,
Who can have eye, or ear, or thought for others?

FIRST MAID.

You raise your fancies high!

SECOND MAID.

And raise them vainly!
The King disdains all love!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Who spoke of love?
The sunflower, gazing on the Lord of heaven,

Asks but its sun to shine !—Who spoke of love ?
 And who would wish the bright and lofty Louis
 To stoop from glory ? Love should not confound
 So great a spirit with the herd of men.
 Who spoke of love ?——

FIRST MAID.

My country friend, you talk
 Extremely well ; but some young lord will teach you
 To think of Louis less, and more of love.

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, ev'n the very presence of his greatness
 Exalts the heart from each more low temptation.
 He seems to walk the earth as if to raise
 And purify our wandering thoughts, by fixing
 Thought on himself;—and she who thinks on Louis
 Shuts out the world, and scorns the name of love !

FIRST MAID.

Wait till you're tried— (Music.)

But, hark ! the music chides us
 For wasting this most heavenly night so idly.
 Come ! let us join the dancers.

[*Exeunt Maids.*

(*As La Vallière follows, the King steals from the
 bosquet, and takes her hand, while Lauzun re-
 tires in the opposite direction.*)

LOUIS.

Sweet La Vallière !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah !—

LOUIS.

Nay, fair lady, fly not, ere we welcome
Her who gives night its beauty !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, permit me !

My comrades wait me.

LOUIS.

What ! my loveliest subject
So soon a rebel ? Silent !—Well, *be* mute,
And teach the world the eloquence of blushes.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I may not listen—

LOUIS.

What if *I* had set
Thyself the example ? What if I had listened,
Veiled by yon friendly boughs, and dared to
dream
That one blest word which spoke of Louis absent
Might charm his presence, and make Nature
music ?

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You did not, Sire ! you could not !

LOUIS.

Could not hear thee,
Nor pine for these divine, unwitnessed moments,
To pray thee, dearest lady, to divorce
No more the thought of love from him who loves
 thee,
And—faithful still to glory—swears thy heart
Unfolds the fairest world a king can conquer !
Hear me, Louise !

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No, Sire ; forget those words !
I am not what their foolish meaning spoke me,
But a poor simple girl, who loves her King,
And honour *more* ! Forget, and do not scorn me !

[*Exit Mademoiselle de la Vallière.*

LOUIS.

Her modest coyness fires me more than all
Her half-unconscious and most virgin love.

(*Enter Queen, Courtiers, Ladies, Guests, &c. ; Lauzun,
Grammont, and Montespan.*)

Well, would the dancers pause awhile ?

QUEEN.

Ev'n pleasure
Wearies at last.

LOUIS.

We've but to change its aspect,
And it resumes its freshness.—Ere the banquet
Calls us, my friends, we have prepared a game
To shame the lottery of this life, wherein
Each prize is neighboured by a thousand blanks.
Methinks it is the duty of a monarch
To set the balance right, and bid the wheel
Shower nought but prizes on the hearts he loves.
What ho, there ! with a merry music, raise
Fortune, to shew how Merit conquers Honours !

Music.

(The pavilion at the back of the stage opens, and discovers the Temple of Fortune, superbly illuminated. Fortune ; at her feet, a wheel of light ; at either hand, a golden vase, over each of which presides a figure — the one representing Merit, the other Honour.)

LOUIS.

Approach, fair dames and gallants ! Aye, as now,
May Fortune smile upon the friends of Louis.

(The Courtiers and ladies groupe around the vases. From the one over which Merit presides they draw lots, and receive in return from Honour various gifts of jewels, &c.)

(Enter Mademoiselle de la Vallière at the back of the stage. The King joins and converses with her in dumb show.)

MONTESPAN.

Now then for me!—

(Draws and receives a necklace.)

A very lovely trinket!

LAUZUN *(followed by an old Lady of the Court.)*

Out on my stars!—there is a dear old woman
Who takes my notes to Montespan's fair wife,
And wants a present; if I give the ring
I drew, the haridan will play town-crier,
And all the Court will laugh at Lauzun's taste,
And take the wrinkled Mercury for my Venus.
Oho! the Marquis! 'faith I'll make him pay
My messenger to Madame.

MONTESPAN.

How it glitters!

Ten thousand crowns at least! it sha'n't go under!

LAUZUN *(taking the necklace.)*

Prithee, indulge me, Marquis; tell me, now,
What would you do with this poor bauble?

MONTESPAN.

What?

Why, (let it be between us!—not a word
To my dear wife!) I'll turn it into monies.

LAUZUN.

Fie on you, Marquis, you disgrace our order ;
It ought to make your fortune as a man
Of taste and gallantry.

(Turns to Old Lady.)

Ah, Madame, see
What luck our Marquis has !

OLD LADY.

Superb ! the first
Water !

MONTESPAN.

She has the water in her mouth ;
Liquorish old jade !

LAUZUN.

What, you admire the toy ?

OLD LADY.

Nay, who would not ?

LAUZUN.

The Marquis begs you'll give it
The worth such trifles take when worn by beauty !

MONTESPAN.

I—I—I'm in despair ! Don't be so silly.

OLD LADY.

Sweet Marquis, you're too gallant.

LAUZUN.

Yes, he says,
He shall be in despair if you disdain it.
(*Old Lady puts on the necklace, curtsies profoundly to
Montespan, and retires.*)

There, Marquis ; there, I've done it.

MONTESPAN.

Done it ! yes !

Nice doings !

LAUZUN.

Hush ! her great grand niece's cousin
Is aunt to the third cousin of a maid
Of honour to the Queen—you understand me ?

MONTESPAN.

And what of that ? I drew a necklace, Sir,
Not that old woman's pedigree from Adam.

LAUZUN.

Your wit is dense to-night, my dearest Marquis ;
If you reflect, you'll see the Queen must hear of it.

MONTESPAN (*softened.*)

Aha ! I see,—the Queen will hear of it !

LAUZUN.

And cry to Louis, ' What a generous man
Is that sweet Marquis !'

MONTESPAN.

Well now, I'm enraptured !

LOUIS.

(To Mademoiselle de la Vallière.)

Nay, if you smile not on me, then the scene
Hath lost its charm.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O Sire, all eyes are on us !

LOUIS.

All eyes *should* learn where homage should be
rendered.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I pray you, Sire—

THE QUEEN.

Will't please your Majesty
To try your fortune ?

(Looks scornfully at Mademoiselle de la Vallière.)

LOUIS.

Fortune ! Sweet La Vallière,
I only seek my fortune in thine eyes.

*(Music. Louis draws, and receives a diamond bracelet.
Ladies crowd round.)*

FIRST LADY.

How beautiful !

SECOND LADY.

Each gem were worth a duchy !

THIRD LADY.

Oh, happy she upon whose arm the King
Will bind the priceless band !

LOUIS.

(Approaching Mademoiselle de la Vallière.)

Permit me, Lady.

(Clasps the bracelet.)

LAUZUN.

Well done—well play'd ! In that droll game call'd
Woman,
Diamonds are always trumps for hearts.

FIRST LADY.

Her hair's

Too light !

SECOND LADY.

Her walk is so provincial !

THIRD LADY.

D'ye think she paints ?

LAUZUN.

Ha ! ha ! What envious eyes,
What fawning smiles, await the King's new
Mistress !

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Gardens of the Fontainebleau.

Enter Bragelone.

BRAGELONE.

Why did we suffer her to seek the court?
It is a soil in which the reptile Slander
Still coils in slime around the fairest flower.
Can it be true?—Strange rumours pierced my tent
Coupling her name with—pah!—how foul the
thought is!—
The maid the King loves!—Fie! I'll not believe it!
I left the camp—sped hither: if she's lost,
Why then!—down—down, base heart! wouldst
thou suspect her?
Thou—who shouldst be her shelter from suspicion?
But I may warn, advise, protect, and save her—
Save—'tis a fearful word!

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Lord Bragelone !
Methought your warrior spirit never breathed
The air of palaces ! No evil tidings,
I trust, from Dunkirk ?

BRAGELONE.

No. The *fleur-de-lis*
Rears her white crest unstained. Mine own affairs
Call me to court.

LAUZUN.

Affairs ! I hate the word ;
It sounds like debts.

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

This courtier may instruct me.
(*Aloud.*) Our King—he bears him well ?

LAUZUN.

Oh, bravely, Marquis ;
Engaged with this new palace of Versailles.
It costs some forty millions !

BRAGELONE.

Ay, the People
Groan at the burthen !

LAUZUN.

People !—what's the *People* ?
I never heard that word at court !—The *People* !

BRAGELONE.

I doubt not, Duke. The People, like the Air,
Is rarely heard, save when it speaks in thunder.
I pray you grace for that old-fashioned phrase.
What is the latest news ?

LAUZUN.

His majesty
Dines half an hour before his usual time.
That's the last news at court !—it makes sensation !

BRAGELONE.

Is there no weightier news ? I heard at Dunkirk
How the King loved a——loved a certain maiden—
The brave La Vallière's daughter !

LAUZUN.

How, my Lord,
How can you vegetate in such a place ?
I fancy the next tidings heard at Dunkirk
Will be that—Adam's dead !

BRAGELONE.

The news is old, then ?

BRAGELONE.

Oh, yes, you dare, with hints and smiles,
To darken fame—to ruin the defenceless—
Blight with a gesture—wither with a sneer !
Did I say ‘ dare not ? ’—No man dares it better !

LAUZUN.

My Lord, these words must pass not !

BRAGELONE.

Duke, forgive me !
I am a rough, stern soldier—taught from youth
To brave offence, and by the sword alone
Maintain the licence of my speech. Oh, say—
Say, but one word !—say this poor maid is sinless,
And, for her father’s sake—(*her father loved me !*)
I’ll kneel to thee for pardon !

LAUZUN.

Good, my Lord,
I know not what your interest in this matter :
’Tis said that Louis loves the fair La Vallière ;
But what of that ?—good taste is not a crime !
’Tis said La Vallière does not hate the King ;
But what of that ?—it does but prove her—loyal !
I know no more. I trust you’re satisfied ;
If not——

BRAGELONE.

Thou liest !

LAUZUN.

Nay, then, draw !

(They fight—after a few passes, Lauzun is disarmed.)

BRAGELONE.

There, take

Thy sword ! Alas ! each slanderer wears a weapon
No honest arm can baffle—*this* is edgeless.

[Exit Bragelone.]

LAUZUN.

Pleasant ! This comes, now, of one's condescending
To talk with men who cannot understand
The tone of good society.—Poor fellow ! ●

[Exit Lauzun.]

SCENE II.

Enter Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He loves me, then ! He loves me ! Love ! wild
word !

Did I say love ? Dishonour, shame, and crime
Dwell on the thought ! And yet—and yet—*he*
loves me !

(Re-enter Bragelone, at the back of the stage.—She takes out the King's picture.)

Mine early dreams were prophets !—Steps ! The King ?

BRAGELONE.

No, lady ; pardon me !—a joint mistake ;
You sought the King—and I Louise la Vallière !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You here, my Lord !—you here !

BRAGELONE.

There was a maiden
Fairer than many fair ; but sweet and humble,
And good and spotless, through the vale of life
She walked, her modest path with blessings strewed ;
(For all men bless'd her ;) from her crystal name,
Like the breath i' the mirror, even envy passed :
I sought that maiden at the court ; none knew her.
May I ask you—where now Louise la Vallière ?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Cruel !—unjust !—You were my father's friend,
Dare you speak thus to me ?

BRAGELONE.

Dare ! dare !—'Tis well !
You have learnt your state betimes !——

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My state, my Lord!
I know not by what right you thus assume
The privilege of insult!

BRAGELONE.

Ay, reproach!
The harlot's trick—for shame! Oh, no, your
pardon!
You are too high for shame: and so—farewell!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord!—my Lord, in pity—No!—in *justice*,
Leave me not thus!

BRAGELONE.

Louise!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Have they belied me?
Speak, my good Lord!—What crime have I com-
mitted?

BRAGELONE.

No crime—at courts! 'Tis only Heaven and
Honour
That deem it aught but—most admired good
fortune!
Many, who swept in careless pride before

The shrinking, spotless, timorous La Vallière,
Will now fawn round thee, and with bended knees
Implore sweet favour of the King's kind mistress.
Ha ! ha !—this is not crime ! Who calls it crime ?
Do prudes say ' Crime ? ' Go, bribe them, and
they'll swear
Its name is greatness. Crime, indeed !—ha ! ha !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My heart finds words at length !—'Tis false !

BRAGELONE.

'Tis false !

Why, speak again ! Say once more it is false—
'Tis false !—again, 'tis false !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O God, I'm wretched !

BRAGELONE.

No, lady, no ! not wretched, if not guilty !

(Mademoiselle de la Vallière, after walking to and fro in great agitation, seats herself on one of the benches of the garden, and covers her face with her hands.)

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

Are these the tokens of remorse ? No matter !
I loved her well !—And love is pride, not love,
If it forsake ev'n guilt amidst its sorrows !

(*Aloud.*)

Louise ! Louise !—Speak to thy friend, Louise !
Thy father's friend !—thine own !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

This hated court !

Why came I hither ?—Wherefore have I closed
My heart against its own most pleading dictates ?
Why clung to virtue, if the brand of vice
Sear my good name ?—

BRAGELONE.

That, when thou pray'st to God,

Thy soul may ask for *comfort*—not *forgiveness* !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rising eagerly.*)
A blessed thought !—I thank thee !

BRAGELONE.

Thou art innocent !

Thou hast denied the King ?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I *have* denied him !

BRAGELONE.

Curs'd be the lies that wrong'd thee !—doubly curst
The hard, the icy selfishness of soul,
That, but to pander to an hour's caprice,
Blasted that flower of life—fair fame ! Accurst
The King who casts his purple o'er his vices !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hold!—thou malign'st thy king!

BRAGELONE.

He spared not thee!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The king—God bless him!

BRAGELONE.

Wouldst thou madden me?

Thou!—No—thou lov'st him not?—thou hid'st
thy face!

Woman, thou tremblest! Lord of Hosts, for this
Hast thou preserved me from the foeman's sword,
And through the incarnadined and raging seas
Of war upheld my steps?—made life and soul
The sleepless priests to that fair idol—Honour?
Was it for this?—I loved thee not, Louise,
As gallants love! Thou wert this life's IDEAL,
Breathing through earth the Lovely and the Holy,
And clothing Poetry in human beauty!
When in this gloomy world they spoke of sin,
I thought of thee, and smiled—for thou wert sinless!
And when they told of some diviner act
That made our nature noble, my heart whispered—
'So would have done Louise!'—'Twas thus I loved
thee!

To lose thee, I can bear it ; but to lose,
With thee, all hope, all confidence, of virtue—
This—*this* is hard !—Oh ! I am sick of earth !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, speak not thus !—be gentle with me. Come,
I am not what thou deem'st me, Bragelone ;
Woman I am, and weak. Support, advise me !
Forget the lover, but be still the friend.
Do not desert me—*thou* !

BRAGELONE.

Thou lov'st the King !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

But I can fly from love !

BRAGELONE.

Poor child ! And whither ?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Take me to the old castle, to my mother !

BRAGELONE.

The king can reach thee there !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He'll not attempt it.

Alas ! in courts, how quickly men forget !

BRAGELONE.

Not till their victim hath surrendered all !
Hadst thou but yielded, why thou mightst have
lived

Beside his very threshold, safe, unheeded ;
But thus, with all thy bloom of heart unrifled,—
The fortress stormed, not conquered,—why man's
pride,

If not man's lust, would shut thee from escape !
Art thou in earnest,—wouldst thou truly fly
From gorgeous infamy to tranquil honour,
God's house alone may shelter thee !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The convent !

Alas ! alas ! to meet those eyes no more !
Never to hear that voice !

BRAGELONE (*departing.*)

Enough.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yet, stay !

I'll see him once ! one last farewell—and then—
Yes, to the convent !

BRAGELONE.

I have done !—and yet,
Ere I depart, take back the scarf thou gav'st me.
Then didst 'thou honour worth !' now, gift and
giver
Alike are worthless !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Worthless ! Didst thou hear me ?
Have I not said that——

BRAGELONE.

Thou wouldst see the King!
 Vice first, and virtue after! O'er the marge
 Of the abyss thou tremblest! One step more,
 And from all heaven the Angels shall cry '*Lost!*'
 Thou ask'st that single step! Wouldst thou be
 saved,
 Lose not a moment!—Come!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*in great agony.*)

 Beside that tree,
 When stars shone soft, he vowed for aye to love
 me!

BRAGELONE.

Think of thy mother! At this very hour
 She blesses God that thou wert born—the last
 Fair scion of a proud and stainless race!
 To-morrow, and thy shame may cast a shade
 Over a hundred 'scutcheons, and thy mother
 Feel thou wert born that *she* might long to die!
 Come!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am ready—take my hand!
 (*Her eye falls on the bracelet.*)

Away!

This is his gift! And shall I leave him thus?
 Not one kind word to break the shock of parting—

BRAGELONE.

And break a mother's heart !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Be still ! Thou'rt man !

Thou canst not feel as woman feels !—her weakness
Thou canst not sound ! O Louis, Heaven protect
thee !

May Fate look on thee with La Vallière's eyes !
Now I am ready, sir ! Thou'st seen how weak
Woman is ever where she loves. *Now*, learn,
Proportioned to that weakness is the strength
With which she conquers love !—O Louis ! Louis !
Quick ! take me hence !—

BRAGELONE.

The heart she wrongs hath saved her !
And is that all !—The shelter for mine age—
The Hope that was the garner for Affection—
The fair and lovely tree, beneath whose shade
The wearied soldier thought to rest at last,
And watch life's sun go calm and cloudless down,
Smiling the day to sleep—all, all lie shattered !
No matter ! I have saved thy soul from sorrow,
Whose hideous depth thy vision cannot fathom.
Joy !—I have saved thee !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah ! when last we parted,
I told thee, of thy love I was not worthy.
Another shall replace me !

BRAGELONE (*smiling sadly.*)

Hush! Another!

No!—See, I wear thy colours still!—Though Hope
Wanes from the plate, the dial still remains,
And takes no light from stars! I—I am nothing!
But thou—Nay, weep not! Yet these tears are
honest:

Thou hast not lived to make the Past one blot,
Which life in vain would weep away! Poor maiden!
I could not cheer thee *then*. Now, joy!—I've
saved thee!

[*Exeunt Mademoiselle de la Vallière and Bragelone.*

SCENE III.

*The King's Cabinet at Fontainebleau; * the King
seated at a table, covered with papers, &c., writing.*

Enter Lauzun.

LOUIS.

Lauzun, I sent for you. Your zeal has served me,

* To some it may be interesting to remember that this cabinet, in which the most powerful of the Bourbon kings is represented as rewarding the minister of his pleasures, is the same as that in which is yet shewn the table upon which Napoleon Bonaparte (son of a gentleman of Corsica) signed the abdication of the titles and the dominions of Charlemagne!

And I am grateful. There, this order gives you
The lands and lordship of De Vesci.

. . . LAUZUN.

Sire,
How shall I thank your goodness ?

LOUIS.

Hush !—by silence !

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

A king's forbidden fruit has pretty windfalls !

LOUIS.

This beautiful Louise ! I never loved
Till now.

LAUZUN.

She yields not yet ?

LOUIS.

But gives refusal
A voice that puts ev'n passion to the blush
To own one wish so soft a heart denies it !

LAUZUN.

A woman's No ! is but a crooked path
Unto a woman's Yes ! Your Majesty
Saw her to-day ?

LOUIS.

No !—Grammont undertakes

To bear, in secret, to her hand, some lines
That pray a meeting.—I await his news.

(*Continues writing.*)

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

I'll not relate my tilt with Bragelone.
First, I came off the worst.—No man of sense
Ever confesses that ! And, secondly,
This most officious, curious, hot-brained Quixote
Might make him jealous ; jealous kings are peevish ;
And, if he fall to questioning the lady,
She'll learn who told the tale, and spite the teller.
Oh ! the great use of logic !

LOUIS.

'Tis in vain
I strive by business to beguile impatience !
How my heart beats !—Well, Count !

Enter Grammont.

GRAMMONT.

Alas ! my Liege !

LOUIS.

Alas !—Speak out !

GRAMMONT.

The court has lost La Vallière !

LOUIS.

Ha !—lost !

GRAMMONT.

She has fled, and none guess whither.

LOUIS.

Fled !

I'll not believe it !—Fled !

LAUZUN.

What matters, Sire ?

No spot is sacred from the king !

LOUIS.

By Heaven

I *am* a king !—Not all the arms of Europe
Could wrest one jewel from my crown. And she—
What is my crown to her ? I am a king !
Who stands between the king and her he loves
Becomes a traitor—and may find a tyrant !
Follow me ! *[Exit Louis.]*

GRAMMONT.

Who e'er heard of maids of honour
Flying from kings ?

LAUZUN.

Ah, had *you* been a maid,
How kind you would have been, you rogue !—
Come on !

[Exeunt Lauzun and Grammont.]

SCENE IV.

Interior of a Convent Chapel ; a lofty Crucifix in the centre of the aisle, before which kneels Mademoiselle de la Vallière ; Night—Thunder and Lightning, the latter made visible through the long oriel windows.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rising.*)

Darkly the night sweeps on. No thought of sleep
Steals to my heart. What sleep is to the world
Prayer is to me—life's balm, and grief's oblivion !
Yet, ev'n before the altar of my God,
Unhallowed fire is raging through my veins—
Heav'n on my lips, but earth within my heart—
And while I pray *his* memory prompts the prayer,
And all I ask of Heaven is—' Guard my Louis !'
Forget him—*that* I dare not pray ! I would not
Ev'n if I could, be happy, and forget him !

[*Thunder.*

Roll on, roll on, dark chariot of the storm.
Whose wheels are thunder !—the rack'd elements
Can furnish forth no tempest like the war
Of passions in one weak and erring heart !

[*The bell tolls one.*

Hark to night's funeral knell ! How through the
roar

Of winds and thunder thrills that single sound,
Solemnly audible !—the tongue of time,
In time's most desolate hour !—it bids us muse
On worlds which love can reach not ! Life runs fast
To its last sands ! To bed, to bed !—to tears
And wishes for the grave !—to bed, to bed !

[A trumpet is heard without.

Two or three Nuns hurry across the stage.

FIRST NUN.

Most strange !

SECOND NUN.

In such a night, too ! The great gates,
That ne'er unclose save to a royal guest,
Unbarred !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What fear, what hope, by turns distracts me !

[The trumpet sounds again.

FIRST NUN.

Hark ! in the court, the ring of hoofs !—the door
Creaks on the sullen hinge !

LAUZUN (*without.*)

Make way !—the King !

Enter Louis and Lauzun.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rushing forward.*)

Oh, Louis!—oh, belov'd! (*Then pausing abruptly.*)

No, touch me not!

Leave me! in pity leave me! Heavenly Father,
I fly to thee! Protect me from his arms—
Protect me from myself!

[*Sinks at the foot of the crucifix.*

LOUIS.

Oh bliss!—Louise!

Enter Abbess and other Nuns.

ABBESS.

Peace, peace! What clamour desecrates the shrine
And solitudes of God?

LAUZUN.

Madam, your knee—

The King!

ABBESS.

The King!—you mock me, sir!

LOUIS (*quitting Mademoiselle de la Vallière.*)

Behold

Your Sovereign, reverend Mother! We have come
To thank you for your shelter of this lady,
And to reclaim our charge.

ABBESS.

My Liege, these walls
Are sacred even from the purple robe
And sceptred hand.

LOUIS.

She hath not ta'en the vow !
She's free !—we claim her !—she is of our court !
Woman,—go to !

ABBESS.

The maiden, Sire, is free !
Your royal lips have said it !—She is free !
And if this shrine her choice, whoe'er compels her
Forth from the refuge, doth incur the curse
The Roman Church awards to even Kings !
Speak, lady !—dost thou claim against the court
The asylum of the cloister ?

LOUIS.

Darest thou brave us ?

LAUZUN (*aside to Louis.*)

Pardon, my Liege !—reflect ! Let not the world
Say that the king—

LOUIS.

Can break his bonds !—Away !
I was a man before I was a king !
(*Approaching Mademoiselle de la Vallière.*)

Lady, we do command your presence ! (*Lowering his voice.*) Sweet !

Adored Louise !—if ever to your ear
My whispers spoke in music—if my life
Be worth the saving, do not now desert me !

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*clinging to the crucifix.*)

Let me not hear him, Heaven !—Strike all my
senses !
Make—make me dumb, deaf, blind,—but keep me
honest !

ABBESS.

Sire, you have heard her answer !

LOUIS (*advancing passionately, pauses, and then with great dignity.*)

Abbess, no !

This lady was entrusted to our charge—
A fatherless child !—The King is now her father !
Madam, we would not wrong you ; but we know
That sometimes most unhallowed motives wake
Your zeal for converts !—This young maid is
wealthy,
And nobly born !—Such proselytes may make
A convent's pride, but oft a convent's victims !
No more !—we claim the right the law awards us,
Free and alone to commune with this maiden.

If then her choice go with you—be it so;
We are no tyrant! Peace!—retire!

ABBESS.

My Liege!

Forgive—

LOUIS.

We do!—Retire!

(Lauzun, the Abbess, &c., withdraw.)

LOUIS.

We are alone!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Alone!—No! God is present, and the conscience!

LOUIS.

Ah! fear'st thou, then, that heart that would resign
Ev'n love itself to guard one pang from thee?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE *(rising, but still
with one arm clinging to the crucifix.)*

I *must* speak!—Sire, if every drop of blood
Were in itself a life, I'd shed them all
For one hour's joy to thee!—But fame and virtue—
My father's grave—my mother's lonely age—
These, these—

(Thunder.)

I hear their voice!—the fires of Heaven
Seem to me like the eyes of angels, and
Warn me against myself!—Farewell!

LOUIS.

Louise,
I will not hear thee ! What ! farewell ? that word
Sounds like a knell to all that's worth the living !
Farewell ! why, then, farewell all peace to Louis
And the poor King is once more but a thing
Of state and forms. The impulse and the passion—
The blessed air of happy human life—
The all that made him envy not his subjects
Dies in that word ! Ah, canst thou—dar'st thou
say it ?

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh, speak not thus !—Speak harshly !—threat :
command !—
Be all the King !

LOUIS.

The King ! he kneels to thee !
[*Lightning.*

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Not there !—not at the cross !—the angry lightning,
See how it darts around !—not there !

LOUIS (*passing his arm round her.*)

So ever

Would this heart guard thine own !

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In mercy leave me !
I'm weak—be generous ! My own soul betrays me ;
But *thou* betray me not !

LOUIS.

Nay, hear me, sweet one !—
Desert me not this once, and I will swear
To know no guiltier wish—to curb my heart—
To banish hope from love—and nurse no dream
Thy spotless soul itself shall blush to cherish ?
Hear me, Louise—thou lov'st me ?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Love thee, Louis !

LOUIS.

Thou lov'st me,—then confide ! Who loves, *trusts*
ever !

*(Mademoiselle de la Vallière has insensibly let go her
hold of the cross, and now placing her hand on his
arm, looks him in the face.)*

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Trust thee !—ah ! *dare* I ?

LOUIS (*clasping her in his arms.*)

Ay, till death ! What ho !

Lauzun ! I say !

Enter Lauzun.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

(Endeavouring again to cling to the cross.)

No, no !

LOUIS.

Not trust me, dearest ?

(She falls on his shoulder—the Abbess and Nuns advance.)

ABBESS.

Still firm !

LAUZUN.

No, Madam !—Way, there, for the King !

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

*An Ante-Chamber in the Palace of Madame la Duchesse
de la Vallière at Versailles.*

*Enter Lauzun and Madame de Montespan, at opposite
doors.*

LAUZUN.

Ha ! my fair friend, well met !—how fares Athenè ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Weary with too much gaiety ! Now, tell me,
Do *you* ne'er tire of splendor ? Does this round
Of gaudy pomps—this glare of glitt'ring nothings—
Does it ne'er pall upon you ? To my eyes
'Tis as the earth would be if turfed with scarlet,
Without one spot of green.

LAUZUN.

We all feel thus
Until we are used to it. Art has grown *my* nature,

And if I see green fields, or ill-dressed people,
I cry 'how artificial !' With me, '*Nature*'
Is 'Paris and Versailles.' The word, 'a man,'
Means something noble, that one sees at court.
Woman's the thing Heaven made for wearing
trinkets
And talking scandal. That's my state of nature !
You'll like it soon ; you have that temper which
Makes courts its element.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And how ?—define, Sir.

LAUZUN.

First, then—but shall I not offend ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Be candid.
I'd know my faults, to make them look like virtues.

LAUZUN.

First, then, Athenè, you've an outward frankness.
Deceit in you looks honester than truth.
Thoughts, at a court, like faces on the stage,
Require some rouge. You rouge your thoughts
so well
That one would deem their only fault, that nature
Gave them too bright a bloom !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Proceed !

LAUZUN.

Your wit,

Is of the true court breed—it plays with nothings ;
Just bright enough to warm, but never burn—
Excites the dull, but ne’er offends the vain.
You have much energy ; it looks like feeling !
Your cold ambition seems an easy impulse ;
Your head most ably counterfeits the heart,
But never, like the heart, betrays itself !
Oh ! you’ll succeed at court !—you see I know
you !
Not so this new-made Duchess—young La Vallière.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The weak, fond, fool !

LAUZUN.

Yes, weak—*she* has a heart ;
Yet *you*, too, love the King !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And she does *not* !
 She loves but *Louis*—I but love the *King* :
 Pomp, riches, state, and power—these who would
 love not ?

LAUZUN.

Bravo! well said!—Oh, you'll succeed at court!
 I knew it well! it was for this I chose you—
 Induced your sapient lord to waste no more
 Your beauty in the shade—for this prepared
 The Duchess to receive you to her bosom,
 Her dearest friend; for this have duly fed
 The King's ear with your praise, and cleared your
 way
 To rule a sovereign and to share a throne.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

I know thou hast been my architect of power;
 And, when the pile is built—

LAUZUN (*with a smile.*)

 Could still o'erthrow it,
 If thou couldst play the ingrate!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

I!—nay!

LAUZUN.

 Hear me!
 Each must have need of each. Long live the King!
 Still let his temples ache beneath the crown.
 But all that kings can give—wealth, rank, and
 power—
 Must be for *us*—the King's friend and his favourite.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

But is it easy to supplant the Duchess?
All love La Vallière! Her meek nature shrinks
Ev'n from our homage; and she wears her state
As if she pray'd the world to pardon greatness.

LAUZUN.

And thus destroys herself! At court, Athenè,
Vice, to win followers, takes the front of virtue,
And looks the dull plebeian things called *moral*
To scorn, until they blush to be unlike her.
Why is De Lauzun not her friend? Why plotting
For a new rival? Why?—Because De Lauzun
Wins not the power he looked for from her friend-
ship!
She keeps not old friends!—and she makes no new
ones!
For who would be a friend to one who deems it
A crime to ask his Majesty a favour?
'*Friends*' is a phrase at Court that means *Promotion*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Her folly, I confess, would not be mine.
But, grant her faults—the King still loves the
Duchess!

LAUZUN.

Since none are by, I'll venture on a treason,
And say, the King's a man! — and men will
change!

I have his ear, and you shall win his eye.
'Gainst a new face, and an experienced courtier,
What chance hath this poor, loving, simple woman?
Besides, she has too much conscience for a king!
He likes not to look up, and feel how low,
Ev'n on the throne that overlooks the world,
His royal greatness dwarfs beside that heart
That never stooped to sin, save when it loved him!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You're eloquent, my Lord!

LAUZUN.

Ah! of such natures
You and I know but little!—(*Aside.*) This must
cease,
Or I shall all disclose my real aims!
(*Aloud.*) The King is with the Duchess?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Yes!

LAUZUN.

As yet

She doth suspect you not?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Suspect !—the puppet !
 No ; but full oft, her head upon my bosom,
 Calls me her truest friend !—invites me ever
 To amuse the King with my enlivening sallies,—
 And still breaks off, in sighing o'er the past,
 To wish her spirit were as blithe as mine,
 And fears her Louis wearies of her sadness !

LAUZUN.

So, the plot ripens !—ere the King came hither,
 I had prepared his royal pride to chafe
 At that sad face, whose honest sorrow wears
 Reproach unconsciously ! You'll learn the issue !
 Now, then, farewell !—we understand each other !

[*Exit Lauzun.*]

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And once I loved this man !—and still might love
 him,
 But that I love ambition ! Yes, my steps
 Now need a guide ; but once upon the height,
 And I will have no partner ! Thou, lord Duke,
 With all thine insolent air of proud protection,
 Thou shalt wait trembling on my nod, and bind
 Thy fortune to my wheels ! O man !—vain man !
 Well sung the poet,—when this power of beauty

Heaven gave our sex, it gave the only sceptre
Which makes the world a slave ! And I will
wield it !

[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*

SCENE II.

*The Scene opens and discovers the King and the Duchess
de la Vallière at chess.*

LOUIS.

But one move more !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Not so ! I check the king !

LOUIS.

A vain attempt !—the king is too well guarded !
There,—check again ! Your game is lost !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

As usual,
Ev'n from this mimic stage of war you rise
Ever the victor.

(*They leave the table and advance.*)

LOUIS.

’Twere a fairer fortune,
My own Louise, to reconcile the vanquished !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*sadly.*)

My best-loved Louis !

LOUIS.

Why so sad a tone ?
Nay, smile, Louise !—love thinks himself aggrieved
If care cast shadows o’er the heart it seeks
To fill with cloudless sunshine ! Smile, Louise !
Ev’n unkind words were kinder than sad looks.
There—*now* thou glad’st me !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yet ev’n thou, methought,
Did’st wear, this morn, a brow on which the light
Shone less serenely than its wont !

LOUIS.

This morn !

Ay, it is true !—this morn I heard that France
Hath lost a subject monarchs well might mourn !
Oh ! little know the world how much a king,
Whose life is past in *purchasing* devotion,
Loses in one who merited all favour
And scorned to ask the least ! A king, Louise,
Sees but the lackeys of mankind. The true
Lords of our race—the high chivalric hearts—

Nature's nobility—alas ! are proud,
And stand aloof, lest slaves should say they flatter !
Of such a mould was he whom France deplores.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Tell me his name, that I, with thee, may mourn
him.

LOUIS.

A noble name, but a more noble bearer ;
Not to be made by, but to make, a lineage.
Once, too, at Dunkirk, 'twixt me and the foe,
He thrust his gallant breast, already seared
With warrior-wounds, and *his* blood flowed for
mine.

Dead !—his just merits all unrecompensed !—
Obscured, like sun-light, by the suppliant clouds !
He should have died a marshal ! Death did wrong
To strike so soon ! Alas, brave Bragelone !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ha !—did I hear aright, my Liege—my Louis ?
That name—that name !—thou saidst not ' Brage-
lone ?'

LOUIS.

Such was his name, not often heard at court.
Thou didst not know him ? What ! thou art pale !
thou weapest !—
Thou art ill ! Louise, look up !

[He leads her to a seat.]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Be still, O Conscience !
I did not slay him!—Died *too soon* ! Alas !
He should have died with all his hopes unblighted,
Ere I was—what I am !

LOUIS.

What mean these words ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

How did death strike him ?—what disease ?

LOUIS.

I know not.
He had retired from service ; and in peace
Breathed out his soul to some remoter sky !
France only guards his fame ! What was he to
thee
That thou shouldst weep for him ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hast thou ne'er heard
We were betrothed in youth ?

LOUIS (*agitated and aside.*)

Lauzun speaks truth !
I'd not her virgin heart—she lov'd another !
(*Aloud.*) Betrothed ! You mourn him deeply !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, I do !
That broken heart !—I was its dream—its idol !
And with regret is mingled—what repentance !

LOUIS (*coldly*.)

Repentance, Madam ! Well, the word is gracious !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Pardon ! oh, pardon ! But the blow was sudden ;
How can the heart play courtier with remorse ?

LOUIS.

Remorse !—again. Why be at once all honest,
And say you love me not !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Not love you, Louis ?

LOUIS.

Not if you feel repentance to have loved !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What ! think'st thou, Louis, I should love thee more
Did I love virtue less, or less regret it ?

LOUIS.

I pray you truce with these heroic speeches ;
They please us in romance—in life they weary.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis, do I deserve this ?

LOUIS.

Rather, Lady,
Do *I* deserve the mute reproach of sorrow ?
Still less these constant, never-soothed complaints—
This waiting-woman jargon of ‘ *lost virtue*.’

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, this from you ?

LOUIS.

Why, oft—could others hear thee—
Well might they deem thee some poor village
Phoebe,
Whom her false Lubin had deceived, and left,
Robb’d of her only dower ! and not the great
Duchess la Vallière, in our realm of France
Second to none but our anointed race ;
The envy of the beauty and the birth
Of Europe’s court—our city of the world !
Is it so great disgrace, Louise la Vallière,
To wear, unrivalled, in thy breast, the heart
Of Bourbon’s latest, nor her least, of Kings.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, when you deigned to love me, I had hoped
You knew the sunshine of your royal favour

Had fallen on a lowly flower. Let others
Deem that the splendor consecrates the sin !
I'd loved thee with as pure and proud a love,
If thou hadst been the poorest cavalier
That ever served a King—thou know'st it, Louis !

LOUIS.

I would not have it so ! my fame, my glory,
The purple and the orb, are part of me ;
And thou shouldst love them for my sake, and feel
I were not Louis were I less the King.
Still weeping ! Fie ! I tell thee tears freeze back
The very love I still would bear to thee !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Would '*still* !'—didst thou say '*still* ?'

LOUIS.

Come, lady !

Woman, to keep her empire o'er the heart,
Must learn its nature—mould unto its bias—
And rule, by never differing from our humours.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I'll school my features, teach my lips to smile,
Be all thou wilt ; but say not '*still*,' dear Louis !

LOUIS.

Well, well ! no further words ; let peace be with us.

(Aside.)

By Heaven, she weeps with yet intenser passion !
It must be that she loved this Bragelone,
And mourns the loftier fate that made her mine !

(Aloud.)

This gallant soldier, Madam, your betrothed,
Hath some share in your tears ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh, name him not ;

My tears are all unworthy dew to fall
Upon a tomb so honoured !

LOUIS.

Grant me patience !

These scenes are very tedious, fair La Vallière.
In truth, we kings have, in the council chamber,
Enough to make us tearful ;—in the bower
We would have livelier subjects to divert us.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Again forgive me ! I am sick at heart ;
I pray you pardon ;—these sad news have marred
The music of your presence, and have made me
Fit but for solitude. I pray you, Sire,
Let me retire ; and when again I greet you,
I'll wear the mien you'd have me !

LOUIS.

Be it so !

Let me no more disturb you from your thoughts ;
They must be sad. So brave—and your betrothed !
Your grief becomes you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You forgive me, Louis ?

We do not part unkindly ?

LOUIS.

Fair one, no !

[*Exit La Vallière.*

LOUIS.

She was my first love, and my fondest.—*Was !*
Alas, the word must come !—I love her yet,
But love wanes glimmering to that twilight—friend-
ship !

Grant that she never loved this Bragelone ;
Still, tears and sighs make up dull interludes
In passion's short-lived drama ! She is good,
Gentle, and meek,—and I do think she loves me,
(A truth no King is sure of !)—But, in fine,
I have begun to feel the hours are long
Pass'd in her presence ; what I hotly sought
Coldly I weary of. I'll seek De Lauzun :
I like his wit—I almost like his knavery ;

It never makes us yawn, like high-flown virtues.
Thirst, hunger, rest—these are the wants of peasants :

A courtier's wants are titles, place, and gold ;
But a poor king, who has these wants so sated,
Has only one want left—to be amused !

[*Exit Louis.*

SCENE III.

Re-enter the Duchess de la Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis ! dear Louis !—Gone ! alas !—and left me
Half in displeasure !—I was wrong, methinks,
To—no !—I was not wrong to *feel* remorse,
But wrong to give it utterance !

Enter Madame de Montespan.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What ! alone,
Fair friend ? I thought the King——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Has gone, in anger ;
Cold, and in anger.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What, with *thee*, dear Lady ?
On the smooth surface of that angel meekness
I should have thought no angry breath could linger.
But men and kings are——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hush ! I was to blame.
The King's all goodness. Shall I write to him ?
Letters have not our looks—and, oh, one look !
How many hardest hearts one look hath won
A life consumed in words had wooed in vain !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To-night there is high revel at the court ;
There you may meet your truant King.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

To-night !
An age !—How many hours to night ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You know
My office makes my home the royal palace ;
I serve the Queen, and thus shall see your Louis
Ere the sun set.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You !—happy *you* !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perchance,
(The King is ever gracious to your friends,
And knows me of the nearest,) I might whisper,
Though with less sweet a tone, your message to
him,
And be your dove, and bear you back the olive ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My kind Athenè !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Nay, 'tis yours the kindness,
To wear my love so near your heart. But, tell me,
Since you accept my heraldry, the cause
Of strife between you in this court of Love.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Alas ! I know not—save that I offended !
The wherefore boots the heart that loves to know ?

• MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Not much, I own, the poor defendant—woman,
But much the advocate ; I need the brief.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Methinks his kingly nature chafes to see
It cannot rule the conscience as the heart ;

But, tell him, ever henceforth I will keep
Sad thoughts for lonely hours.—Athenè, tell him,
That if he smile once more upon Louise,
The smile shall never pass from that it shines on ;
Say—but I'll write myself.

(Sits down to the table and writes.)

MADAME DE MONTESPAN *(aside.)*

What need of schemes—
Lauzun's keen wit—Athenè's plotting spirit ?
She weaves herself the web that shall ensnare her !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

There ; back these feeble words with all thy beauty,
Thy conquering eyes, and thy bewitching smile.
Sure never suit can fail with such a pleader !
And now a little while to holier sadness,
And thine accusing memory, Bragelone !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Whom speak you of ?—the hero of the Fronde ?
Who seemed the last of the old Norman race,
And half preserved to this degenerate age
The lordly shape the ancient Bayards wore !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You praise him well ! He was my father's friend,
And should have been his son. We were affianced,

And—but no more ! Ah ! cruel, cruel Louis !
You mourned for him—how much more cause
have I !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*quickly.*)

What ! he is dead ? your grief the king resented ?
Knew he your troth had thus been plighted ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes ;
And still he seemed to deem it sin to mourn him !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

A clue—another clue—that I will follow,
Until it lead me to the throne ! — (*Aloud.*) Well,
cheer thee ;

Trust your true friend ; rely on my persuasion.
Methinks I never tasked its powers till now.
Farewell, and fear not ! Oh ! I'll plead your cause,
As if myself the client !—(*Aside.*) Thou art sentenced !
[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Tis a sweet solace still to have a friend—
A friend in *woman* ! Oh, to what a reed
We bind our destinies, when man we love !
Peace, honour, conscience lost—if I lose him,
What have I left ? How sinks my heart within me !

I'll to my chamber ; there the day of tears
Learns night to smile !—*And I'm the thing they
envy !**

[*Exit Duchess de la Vallière.*

SCENE IV.

*The Gardens of Versailles — Lauzun, Grammont,
and Courtiers.*

LAUZUN.

'Tis now the hour in which our royal master
Honours the ground of his rejoicing gardens
By his illustrious footsteps !—there, my lords,
That is the true style-courtier !

* In representation, the actress who may perform the Duchess de la Vallière will pardon me for observing, that the words in italics should be said, not *ironically*, but with a kind of sad and patient wonder. She should appear lost in amazed abstraction at the contrast between her real feelings and the envy she excites, and wake from it with a slight start and smile. And, in one word, now that I am on that subject, the actress should remember that the very soul of La Vallière's character is simplicity ; and that there are few passages in which the *natural* tone of voice will not be more suitable and more effective than the declamatory.

GRAMMONT.

Out upon you !
Your phrase would suit some little German prince,
Of fifteen hundred quarterings and five acres,
And not the world's great Louis ! 'Tis the hour
When Phoebus shrinks abashed, and all the stars
Envy the day that it beholds the King !

*(To them, Marquis de Montespan, in bright scarlet
hose.)*

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

Most beautiful ! You have a turn of thought,
A taste, a sentiment, so chaste and noble !
Oh, I am charmed—enraptured !

LAUZUN.

You here, Marquis !
Why, you make Grammont blush. Such praise
from you
Will turn his bashful brain ! Dear Montespan,
You are the glass of fashion ! Heavens, what
stockings !
The exquisite man !

MONTESPAN.

I'faith, methinks they're pretty.

LAUZUN.

Pretty !—if I were married, 'troth, my Duchess
Should keep her train at a respectful distance ;
You'd set it on a blaze ! You walk the earth
Like Cupid mounted on a pair of flambeaux !
Oh, you're a dangerous man !

MONTESPAN.

So says my wife,
And begs me not to come too near her—lest
She love me too outrageously ! At courts,
People of quality must be decorous ;
'Tis not the mode to seem adored too much.

LAUZUN.

Your wife's an angel ! *Apropos*, dear Marquis ;
You see a friend's advice was worth the taking ;
Your lady's all the rage ;—the King admires her.

MONTESPAN.

The King !—I'm in despair—I mean, dear Duke,
I am enraptured !—hum !—

LAUZUN.

You are not jealous ?

MONTESPAN.

Zounds !—jealous !—no !

LAUZUN.

No Marquis can be jealous !

MONTESPAN.

Not of a count or baron ; but a king !
S'death, if I thought it—were my honour touched,
An' it were fifty kings—

Enter Louis.

LOUIS.

Good day, my Lords !
Pray you be covered. Well!—what says the
Marquis
Of fifty kings ?

MONTESPAN.

I—I—I'm in despair !

LAUZUN.

That fifty kings would never make one Louis !

LOUIS.

Go to, thou flatterer ! Harkye, dear De Lauzun.

*[Exeunt the Courtiers, as the King takes Lauzun
aside.]*

MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

My wife said right ; this worthy duke has got
The true court politesse !—He lies divinely !

[*Exit Montespan.*]

LAUZUN.

This Montespan I own, is wondrous silly ;
But he has one good quality—his wife !

LOUIS.

That's true !—a charming face !

LAUZUN.

Ah ! had she heard you,
Your Majesty had made one blissful subject.

LOUIS.

Nay, Lauzun, nay !

LAUZUN.

Her soul is like the Persian,
And on the loftiest eminence hath built
A shrine of fire. But, pardon me, my Liege ;
I had forgot, your royal taste prefers
Natures that love less warmly—though as well.

LOUIS.

Hem !—But, in truth, this lady's worth the loving ;
And, by mine honour, while we speak, she comes !
A happy fortune.

Enter Madame de Montespan.

LAUZUN (*archly,*)

Sire, may I withdraw ?

LOUIS.

Some message from the Queen ; why—as thou wilt.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

Methinks it may be as I *will* !

[*Exit Lauzun.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

(*Appearing for the first time to perceive Louis.*)

The King !

(*Salutes him, and passes on.*)

LOUIS.

Fair Madam, we had hoped you with you brought
Some bright excuse to grace our cheerless presence
With a less short-lived light ! You dawn upon us
Only to make us more regret your setting.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Sire, if I dared, I would most gladly hail
A few short moments to arrest your presence,
And rid me of a soft, yet painful duty.

LOUIS.

'Tis the first time, be sure, so sweet a voice
E'er crav'd a sanction for delighting silence.
Speak on, we pray thee !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Gracious Sire, the Duchess,
Whom you have lately left, she fears, in anger,
Besought me to present this letter to you.

LOUIS (*takes the letter, and aside.*)

She blushes while she speaks !—'Tis passing strange,
I ne'er remarked those darkly-dreaming eyes,
That melt in their own light !

(*Reads, and carelessly puts up the letter.*)

It scarcely suits
Her dignity, and ours, to choose a witness
To what hath chanced between us. She is good ;
But her youth, spent in some old country castle,
Knows not the delicate spirit of a court.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

She bade me back her suit. Alas ! my Liege,
Who can succeed, if fair La Vallière fail ?

LOUIS.

She bade thee ?—she was prudent ! Were *I* woman,
And loved, I'd not have chosen such a herald.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Love varies in its colours with all tempers ;
The Duchess is too proud to fear a rival,
Too beautiful to find one. May I take
Some word of comfort back to cheer her sadness ?
Made doubly deep by thoughts of your displeasure,
And grief for a dear friend.

LOUIS.

Aye, *that's* the sadness !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

He was a gallant lord, this Bragelone,
And her betrothed. Perchance in youth she loved
him,
Ere the great sun had quenched the morning star !

LOUIS.

She loved him !—think'st thou so ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Indeed I know not ;
But I have heard her eloquent in praise,
And seen her lost in woe. You will forgive her !

LOUIS.

Forgive her ?—there's no cause !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Now, bless you, Sire,
For that one word. My task is done.

LOUIS.

Already?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What can I more? Oh, let me hasten back!
What rapture must be hers who can but fill
An atom of the heart of godlike Louis!
How much more the whole soul!—To lose thy love
Must be, not grief, but some sublime despair
Like that the Roman felt who lost a world!

LOUIS.

By Heaven, she fires me!—a brave, royal spirit,
Worthy to love a king!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To know thee hers,
What pride!—what glory! Though all earth cried
‘Shame!’
Earth could not still the trumpet at her heart,
That, with its swelling and exultant voice,
Told her the earth was but the slave of Louis,
And *she* the partner! And, O hour of dread!

When (for the hour must come) some fairer form
 Shall win thee from her — still, methinks, 'twould be
 A boast to far posterity to point
 To all the trophies piled about thy throne,
 And say—'He loved me once!'—O Sire, your
 pardon ;
 I am too bold.

LOUIS.

Why, this were love, indeed,
 Could we but hope to win it. And such love
 Would weave the laurel in its wreaths of myrtle.
 Beautiful lady ! while thou speak'st, I dream
 What love should be,—and feel where love is not !
 Thou com'st the suitor, to remain the judge ;
 And I could kneel to thee for hope and mercy.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Ah, no !—ah, no !—she is my friend. And if
 She love not as I love—I mean, I *might* love—
 Still she *believes* she loves thee. Tempt me not.
 Who could resist thee ! Sire, farewell !

[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*

LOUIS.

Her voice
 Is hush'd ; but still its queen-like music lingers
 In my rapt ears. I dreamt Louise had loved me ;

She who felt love disgrace ! Before the true,
How the tame counterfeit grows pale and lifeless.
By the sad brow of yon devout La Vallière
I feel a man, and fear myself a culprit !
But this high spirit wakes in mine the sense
Of what it is—I *am* that Louis whom
The world has called 'The Great!'—and in her
pride
Mirror mine own. This jaded life assumes
The zest, the youth, the glory of *excitement* !
To-night we meet again ;—speed fast, dull hours !
[*Exit Louis.*

SCENE V.

Grand Saloon in the Palace of Versailles; in the back ground the suite of Apartments is seen in perspective—the Queen seated to the left of the stage; some of the Ladies of the blood royal seated also, but on stools—many Ladies standing round.

Several Ladies enter, one by one salute the Queen, and pass on to the front of the stage—the Queen half rises to each, and appears to address them in passing, but in dumb show.

FIRST LADY.

How graciously the Queen receives the Guiches!

SECOND LADY.

See, fair La Tremouille's again in favour!

THIRD LADY.

Hush! Lo, the star that rarely gilds the nights
Of the court-heaven—the beautiful La Vallière!

Enter the Duchess de la Vallière—salutes the Queen, who half turns her back upon her in silence.

FIRST LADY.

Saw you the Queen's marked rudeness?

SECOND LADY.

Tush ! the Queen
Is but a cypher ! 'tis the King alone
Whose smile makes up the sum of royal favour.

THIRD LADY.

You're right ; and while that smile is still La
Vallièr's,
She is the real Queen. How say you, Ladies ?
Shall we not pay our court to her ?

*(The Ladies crowd round the Duchess, and appear
to render her the most reverential homage, which
she receives with humility and embarrassment.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

These smiles
Cannot efface that injured woman's frown.
Oh, how the heart that wrong'd avenges her !

*Enter Lauzun, Marquis de Montespan, and several
Courtiers, who, after saluting the Queen, surround
the Duchess de la Vallière with still greater homage.*

FIRST COURTIER.

(Approaching the Duchess de la Vallière.)

Madam, your goodness is to France a proverb !
If I might dare request, this slight memorial
You would convey to our most gracious Master ?

The rank of colonel in the royal guard
Is just now vacant. True, I have not served ;
But I do trust my valour is well known :
I've killed three noted swordsmen in a duel !—
And, for the rest, a word from you were more
Than all the laurels Holland gave to others.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord, forgive me ! I might ill deserve
The friendship of a monarch, if, forgetting
That honours are the attributes of merit ;—
And they who sell the service of the public
For the false coin, soft smiles and honeyed words,
Forge in the antechambers of a palace,
Defraud a people to degrade a king !
If you have merits, let *them* plead for you ;
Nor ask in whispers what you claim from justice.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*to first Courtier, as the
Duchess de la Vallière turns away.*)

Give me the paper. Hush ! the King shall see it.

Music.

*Enter the King, Grammont, and other Courtiers. He
pauses by the Queen, and accosts her respectfully in
dumb show.*

GRAMMONT (*aside.*)

With what a stately and sublime decorum
His Majesty throws grandeur o'er his foibles !

He not disguises vice ; but makes vice kingly—
Most gorgeous of all sensualists !

LAUZUN.

How different
His royal rival in the chase of pleasure,
The spendthrift, sauntering, Second Charles of Eng-
land !

GRAMMONT.

Ay, Jove to Comus !

LAUZUN.

Silence ! Jove approaches !

*(The Queen rises, the crowd breaks up into groups ;
the King passes slowly from each till he joins
the Duchess de la Vallière ; the Courtiers retire.)*

LOUIS.

Why, this is well. I thank you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And forgive me ?

LOUIS.

Forgive you ! You mistake me ; wounded feeling
Is not displeasure. Let this pass, Louise.
Your lovely friend has a most heavenly smile !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And a warm heart. In truth, my Liege, I'm glad
You see her with my eyes.

LOUIS.

You have no friend
Whose face it glads me more to look upon.

(Aside, and gazing on Montespan.)

(What thrilling eyes!)—*(Aloud.)* My thanks are
due to her,

For, with the oil of her mellifluous voice,
Smoothing the waves the passing breeze had
ruffled.

*(Joins Madame de Montespan, and leads her through
the crowd to the back of the stage.)*

LAUZUN *(to Marquis de Montespan.)*

Ar'n't you enraptured, Marquis?

MONTESPAN.

Hum!

LAUZUN.

The King

Is very condescending to your lady!

MONTESPAN.

Oh, mighty condescending! How he eyes her!

LAUZUN.

'Tis all for love of you.

MONTESPAN.

I shall despair
If the King mean me shame !

LAUZUN.

He means you honour.
O what a great man you will be, dear Marquis.
Do not forget your friends !

MONTESPAN.

Why, as you say,
'Tis very flattering—and, on second thoughts,
I clearly see I ought to be enraptured !

(Lauzun leaves Montespan, who mingles with the crowd, and should keep out of sight for the rest of the scene, and joins the Duchess de la Vallière.)

LAUZUN.

Your Grace resolves no more to be content
Eclipsing others. You eclipse yourself.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I thought you were a friend, and not a flatterer.

LAUZUN.

Friendship would lose its dearest privilege
If friendship were forbidden to admire !
Why, ev'n the King admires your Grace's friend,—
Told me to-day she was the loveliest lady

The court could boast. Nay, see how, while they
speak,
He gazes on her. How his breathing fans
The locks that shade the roses of her cheek !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ha ! Nay, be still, my heart.

LAUZUN.

It is but friendship ;
But it looks wondrous warm !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He cannot mean it !
And yet—and yet—he lingers on her hand—
He whispers !

LAUZUN.

How the gossips gaze and smile !
There'll be much scandal.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Lauzun !—what !—thou thinks't not ?
No, no, thou canst not think—

LAUZUN.

That courts know treachery,
That women are ambitious, or men false ;
I will not think it. Pshaw !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My brain swims round !

Louis, of late, hath been so changed. How fair
She looks to-night !—and, oh, *she* has not fallen !
He comes—he nears us—he has left her. Fie !
My foolish fancies wronged him !

LAUZUN.

The spell works.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

*(As the King quits her, to first Courtier, giving him
back the paper.)*

My Lord, your suit is granted.

FIRST COURTIER.

Blessings, Madam !

(The other Courtiers come round him.)

SECOND COURTIER.

Her influence must be great. I know three dukes
Most pressing for the post.

THIRD COURTIER.

A rising sun,

Worthier of worship than that cold La Vallière.

The King as well, methinks, might have no mis-
tress,

As one by whom no courtier grew the richer.

(The Courtiers group round Madame de Montespan.)

LOUIS.

My Lords, you do remember the bright lists
Which, in the place termed thenceforth '*The
Carrousel*,'*

We some time held?—a knightly tournament,
That brought us back the age of the first Francis !

LAUZUN.

Of all your glorious festivals, the greatest !
Who but remembers ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside*.)

Then he wore my colours.

How kind to bring back to my yearning heart
That golden spring-time of our early loves !

LOUIS.

Next week we will revive the heroic pageant.
Proud plumes shall wave, and levelled spears be
shivered ;

Ourself will take the lists, and do defy
The chivalry of our renowned France,
In honour of that lady of our court
For whom we wear the colours, and the motto
Which suits her best—'*Most bright where all are
brilliant* !'

* The *Place du Carrousel* was so named from a splendid festival given by Louis. On the second day, devoted to knightly games, the King, who appeared in the character of *Roger*, carried off four prizes. All the crown jewels were prodigalized on his arms and the trappings of his horse.

GRAMMONT.

Oh, a most kingly notion !

LOUIS.

Ere we part,
Let each knight choose his colours and his lady.
Ourself have set the example.

(The Courtiers mingle with the Ladies, &c. ; many Ladies give their colours.)

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE *(timidly.)*

Oh, my Louis !

I read thy heart ; thou hast chosen this device
To learn thy poor La Vallière to be proud.
Nay, turn not from my blessings. Once before
You wore my colours, though I gave them not.
To-night I give them !—Louis loves me still !

(Takes one of the knots from her breast, and presents it.)

LOUIS.

Lady, the noblest hearts in France would beat
More high beneath your badge. Alas ! my service
Is vowed already *here*.

(Turning to Madame de Montespan, and placing a knot of her colours over his order of the Saint Esprit.)

These are my colours !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

How ! How !

(The King converses apart with Madame de Montespan.)

LAUZUN *(to the Duchess de la Vallière.)*

Be calm, your Grace ; a thousand eyes
Are on you. Give the envious crowd no triumph.
Ah ! had *my* fortune won so soft a heart
I would have——

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Peace !—Away ! Betrayed—Undone !

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Gardens at Versailles.

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

So far, so prosperous ! From the breast of Louis,
The blooming love it bore so long a summer,
Falls like a fruit o'er-ripe ; and, in the court,
And o'er the King, this glittering Montespan
Queens it without a rival,—awes all foes,
And therefore makes all friends. State, office,
honours,
Reflect her smile, or fade before her frown.
So far, so well ! Enough for Montespan.
For Lauzun now !—I love this fair La Vallière,
As well, at least, as woman's worth the loving ;

And if the jewel has one trifling flaw,
The gold 'tis set in will redeem the blemish,
The King's no niggard lover ; and her wealth
Is vast. I have the total in my tablets—
(Besides estates in Picardy and Provence.)
I'm very poor—my debtors very pressing.
I've robbed the Duchess of a faithless lover,
To give myself a wife, and her a husband.
Wedlock's a holy thing,—and wealth a good one !

Enter Marquis de Montespan.

MONTESPAN.

O Duke, behold a miserable man !

LAUZUN.

What ! in despair ?

MONTESPAN.

Despair, sir !—that's a thing
That happens every hour ! But this——

LAUZUN.

Take breath.

What is the matter ?

MONTESPAN.

Banished from the court !

LAUZUN.

Banished? For what offence?

MONTESPAN.

Because the King
Complains my wife's an angel! and declares
Her health will be affected by my temper.
My temper!—I'm a lamb!

LAUZUN.

Perhaps the King
Is jealous of you?

MONTESPAN.

On my life, you've hit it!
And yet, I never gave him any cause!

Enter Louis.

LOUIS (*to Marquis de Montespan.*)

You, my Lord, in the precincts of our palace!—
This is too daring.

MONTESPAN.

Oh, your Majesty,
I do beseech your grace. I am most sorry
To have a wife so good. 'Tis not my fault, Sire.

LOUIS.

Silence, my Lord! Your strange and countless
follies—

The scenes you make—your loud domestic broils—
Bring scandal on our court. Decorum needs
Your banishment; or, since you cannot live
With your fair lady in harmonious concord,
Leave her in peace, and live alone!

MONTESPAN.

Alas!

There is no broil.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

What, contradict the King!

MONTESPAN.

My wife and I are doves!

LOUIS.

You *must* perceive
That it were best for both to break a chain
You both abhor.

MONTESPAN.

I swear——

LOUIS.

Peace, Marquis! Go!
And for your separate household, which entails

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A double cost, our treasurer shall accord you
A hundred thousand crowns.

MONTESPAN.

O generous Monarch !

LOUIS.

Mind, your poor lady, from this hour, is free.
No more. Your exile is revoked. Good day, sir !

MONTESPAN.

A hundred thousand crowns !

LAUZUN.

Begone !

MONTESPAN.

With rapture !

[*Exit Marquis de Montespan.*

LOUIS.

A fool, well rid of. Strange that such a dolt
Should e'er be mated with the bright Athenè.
Pleasure is never stagnant in her presence ;
But every breeze of woman's changeful skies
Ripples the stream, and freshens e'en the sunshine.

LAUZUN.

'Tis said, your Majesty, 'that contrast's sweet,'
And she you speak of well contrasts another,
Whom once——

LOUIS.

I loved ; and still devoutly honour.
This poor La Vallière !—could we will affection,
I would have never changed. And even now
I feel Athenè has but charmed my senses,
And my void heart still murmurs for Louise !
I would we could be friends, since now not lovers,
Nor dare be happy while I know her wretched.

LAUZUN.

Wearies she still your Majesty with prayers,
Tender laments, and passionate reproaches ?

LOUIS.

Her love outlives its hopes.

LAUZUN.

An irksome task
To witness tears we cannot kiss away,
And with cold friendship freeze the ears of love !

LOUIS.

Most irksome and most bootless !

LAUZUN.

Haply, Sire,
In one so pure, the charm of wedded life
Might lull keen griefs to rest, and curb the love
Thou fl'ist from to the friendship that thou seekest?

LOUIS.

I've thought of this. The Duke de Longueville
loves her,
And hath besought before her feet to lay
His princely fortunes.

LAUZUN (*quickly.*)

Ha!—and she——

LOUIS.

Rejects him.

LAUZUN.

Sire, if love's sun, once set, bequeaths a twilight,
'Twould only hover o'er some form whom chance
Had linked with Louis—some one (though un-
worthy)
Whose presence took a charm from brighter
thoughts
That knit it with the past.

LOUIS.

Why, how now, Duke!—
Thou speak'st not of thyself?

LAUZUN.

I dare not, Sire !

LOUIS.

Ha ! ha !—poor Lauzun !—what ! the soft La Vallière
Transfer her sorrowing heart to thee ! Ha ! ha !

LAUZUN.

My name is not less noble than De Longueville's ;
My glory greater, since the world has said
Louis esteems me more.

LOUIS.

Esteems ! No !—favours !
And thou dost think that she, who shrunk from
love,
Lest love were vice, would wed the wildest Lord
That ever laughed at virtue ?

LAUZUN.

Sire, you wrong me ,
Or else you (pardon me) condemn yourself.
Is it too much for one the King calls friend
To aspire to one the King has call'd——

LOUIS.

Sir, hold !
I never so malign'd that hapless Lady

As to give *her* the title only due
 To such as Montespan, who glories in it—
 The *last* my *mistress* ; but the first my *victim* :
 A nice distinction, taught not in your logic,
 Which, but just now, confused esteem and favour.
 Go to ! we kings are not the dupes you deem us.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

So high ! I'll win La Vallière to avenge me,
 And humble this imperial vanity.

(*Aloud.*)

Sire, I offend ! Permit me to retire,
 And mourn your anger ; nor presume to guess
 Whence came the cause. And, since it seems your
 favour
 Made me aspire too high, in that I loved
 Where you, Sire, made love noble, and half-
 dreamed
Might be—nay, *am* not—wholly there disdained—

LOUIS.

How, Duke !

LAUZUN.

I do renounce at once
 The haughty vision. Sire, permit my absence.

LOUIS.

Lauzun, thou hintest that, were suit allowed thee,
La Vallière might not scorn it ;—is it so ?

LAUZUN.

I crave your pardon, Sire.

LOUIS.

Must I ask twice ?

LAUZUN.

I do believe, then, Sire, with time and patience,
The Duchess might be won to—*not reject me !*

LOUIS.

Go, then, and prove thy fortune. We permit thee.
And, if thou prosperest, why then love's a riddle,
And woman is—no matter ! Go, my Lord ;
We did not mean to wound thee. So, forget it !
Woo when thou wilt—and wear what thou canst
win.

LAUZUN.

My gracious Liege, Lauzun commends him to thee ;
And if one word, he merit not, may wound him,
He'll think of favours words can never cancel.
Memory shall med'cine to his present pain.
God save you, Sire !— (*Aside*) to *be* the dupe I
deem you !

[*Exit Lauzun.*

LOUIS.

I love her not ; and yet, methinks, am jealous !
 Lauzun is wise and witty—knows the sex ;
 What if she do ?—No ! I will not believe it.
 And what is she to me ?—a friend—a friend !
 And I would have her wed. 'Twere best for both—
 A balm for conscience—an excuse for change !
 'Twere best :—I marvel much if she'll accept him !

[*Exit Louis.*

SCENE II.

*A private Apartment in the Palace of the Duchess de
 la Vallière.*

Enter the Duchess de la Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He loves me, then, no longer ! All the words
 Earth knows shape but one thought—' He loves no
 longer !'
 Where shall I turn ? My mother—my poor mother !
 Sleeps the long sleep ! 'Tis better so ! Her life
 Ran to its lees. I will not mourn for her.

But it is hard to be alone on earth !
This love, for which I gave so much, is dead,
Save in my heart ; and love, surviving love,
Changes its nature, and becomes despair !
Ah, me !—ah, me ! how hateful is this world !

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

GENTLEMAN.

The Duke de Lauzun !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

News, sweet news, of Louis !

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Dare I disturb your thoughts ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord, you're welcome !
Came you from court to-day ?

LAUZUN.

I left the King
But just now, in the gardens.

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DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*eagerly.*)

Well !

LAUZUN.

He bore him

With his accustomed health !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Proceed.

LAUZUN.

Dear Lady,

I have no more to tell.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Alas ! *No message !*

LAUZUN.

We did converse, 'tis true, upon a subject
Most dear to one of us. Your Grace divines it ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*joyfully.*)

Was it of *me* he spoke ?

LAUZUN.

Of you

I spoke, and *he* replied. I praised your beauty—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You praised !

LAUZUN.

Your form, your face—that wealth of mind
Which, play'd you not the miser, and concealed it,
Would buy up all the coins that pass for wit.
The King, assenting, wished he might behold you
As happy—as your virtues should have made you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Twas said in mockery !

LAUZUN.

Lady, no !—in kindness.
Nay, more, (he added,) would you yet your will
Mould to his wish—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

His wish !—the lightest !

LAUZUN.

Ah !

You know not how my heart throbs while you
speak !
Be not so rash to promise ; or, at least,
Be faithful to perform !
,

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You speak in riddles.

LAUZUN.

Of your lone state and beautiful affections,
Formed to make Home an Eden, our good King,
Tenderly mindful, fain would see you link
Your lot to one whose love might be your shelter.
He spake, and all my long-concealed emotions
Gush'd into words, and I confess'd—O Lady,
Hear me confess once more—how well I love thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You dared?—and *he*—the King—

LAUZUN.

Upon me smiled,

And bade me prosper.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah!

(Sinks down, and covers her face with her hands.)

LAUZUN.

Nay, nay, look up!
The heart that could forsake a love like thine
Doth not deserve regret. Look up, dear Lady!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He bade thee prosper !

LAUZUN.

Pardon ! My wild hope
Outran discretion.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis bade thee prosper !

LAUZUN.

Ah, if this thankless—this remorseless love
Thou couldst forget ! Oh, give me but thy friend-
ship,
And take respect, faith, worship, all, in Lauzun !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Consign me to another ! Well, 'tis well !
Earth's latest tie is broke ! — earth's hopes are
over !

LAUZUN.

Speak to me, sweet Louise !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

So, thou art he
To whom this shattered heart should be sur-
rendered ?—

And thou, the high-born, glittering, scornful
 Lauzun,
 Wouldst take the cast-off leman of a King,
 Nor think thyself disgraced ! Fie !—fie ! thou’rt
 shameless !

LAUZUN.

You were betray’d by love, and not by sin,
 Nor low ambition. Your disgrace is honour
 By the false side of dames the world calls spotless.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Go, sir, nor make me scorn you. If I’ve erred,
 I know, at least, the majesty of virtue,
 And feel—what you forget.

LAUZUN.

Yet hear me, Madam !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Go, go ! You are the King’s friend—you were mine ;
 I would not have you thus debased : refused
 By one, at once the fallen and forsaken !
 His friend shall not be shamed so !

[*Exit the Duchess de la Vallière.*

LAUZUN (*passing his hand over his eyes.*)

I do swear
These eyes are moist! And he who owned this
gem
Casts it away, and cries 'divine' to tinsel!
So falls my hope. My fortunes call me back
To surer schemes. Before that ray of goodness
How many plots shrunk, blinded, into shadow!
Lauzun forgot himself, and dreamt of virtue!
[*Exit Lauzun.*]

SCENE III.

*Gentleman of the Chamber, and Bragelone, as a
Franciscan friar.*

GENTLEMAN.

The Duchess gone! I fear me that, to-day,
You are too late for audience, reverend father.

BRAGELONE.

Audience!—a royal phrase!—it suits the Duchess.
Go, son; announce me.

GENTLEMAN.

By what name, my father ?

BRAGELONE.

I've done with names. . Announce a nameless monk,
Whose prayers have risen o'er some graves she
honours.

GENTLEMAN (*aside.*)

My lady is too lavish of her bounty
To these proud shavelings : yet, methinks, this
friar
Hath less of priest than warrior in his bearing.
He awes me with his stern and thrilling voice,
His stately gesture, and imperious eye.
And yet, I swear, he comes for alms !—the varlet !
Why should I heed him ?

BRAGELONE.

Didst thou hear ? Begone !

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

Yes, she will know me not. My lealest soldier,
One who had march'd, bare-breasted, on the steel,
If I had bid him cast away the treasure
Of the o'er-valued life ; the nurse that reared me,
Or mine own mother, in these shroudlike robes,
And in the immature and rapid age

Which, from my numb'd and withering heart, hath
crept

Unto my features, now might gaze upon me,
And pass the stranger by. Why should she know
me,

If they who lov'd me know not? Hark! I hear
her :

That silver footfall !—still it hath to me
Its own peculiar and most spiritual music,
Trembling along the pulses of the air,
And dying on the heart that makes its echo !
'Tis she ! How lovely yet !

Enter the Duchess de la Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Your blessing, father.

BRAGELONE.

Let courts and courtiers bless the favoured Duchess :
Courts bless the proud ; God's ministers, the
humble.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He taunts me, this poor friar ! Well, my father,
I have obeyed your summons. Do you seek
Masses for souls departed ?—or the debt
The wealthy owe the poor ?—say on !

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Her heart
Is not yet hardened ! Daughter, such a mission
Were sweeter than the task which urged me hither :
You had a lover once—a plain, bold soldier ;
He loved you well !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah, Heaven !

BRAGELONE.

And you forsook him.
Your choice was natural—some might call it noble !
And this blunt soldier pardoned the *desertion*,
But sunk at what his folly termed *dishonour*.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O, Father, spare me !—if dishonour were,
It rested but with me.

BRAGELONE.

So deemed the world,
But not that foolish soldier !—he had learned
To blend his thoughts, his fame, *himself*, with thee ;
Thou wert a purer, a diviner self ;
He loved thee as a warrior worships glory ;
He loved thee as a Roman honoured virtue ;

Spare me ! in mercy, spare me !

This poor fool,

This shadow, living only on thy light,
When thou wert darkened, could but choose to die.
He left the wars ;—no fame, since *thine* was dim :
He left his land ;—what home without Louise ?
It broke—that stubborn, stern, unbending heart—
It broke ! and, breaking, its last sigh—forgave thee !

And I live on !

One eve, methinks, he told me,
Thy hand around his hauberk wound a scarf ;
And thy voice bade him ‘ Wear it for the sake
Of one who honoured worth !’ Were those the
words ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

They were. Alas ! alas !

BRAGELONE.

He wore it, Lady,
Till memory ceased. It was to him the token
Of a sweet dream ; and, from his quiet grave,
He sends it now to thee.—Its hues are faded.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Give it me !—let me bathe it with my tears !
Memorial of my guilt—

BRAGELONE (*in a soft and tender accent.*)

And *his* forgiveness !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

That tone !—ha ! while thou speakest, in thy voice,
And in thy presence, there is something kindred
To him we jointly mourn : thou art—

BRAGELONE.

His brother ;
Of whom, perchance, in ancient years he told thee ;
Who, early wearied of this garish world,
Fled to the convent-shade, and found repose.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*approaching.*)

Ay, is it so?—thou'rt Bragelone's brother?
Why, then, thou art what *he* would be, if living—
A friend to one most friendless!

BRAGELONE.

Friendless!—Ay,
Thou hast learnt, betimes, the truth, that man's
wild passion
Makes but its sport of virtue, peace, affection;
And breaks the plaything when the game is done!
Friendless!—I pity thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh! holy Father,
Stay with me!—succour me!—reprove, but guide
me:
Teach me to wean my thoughts from earth to
heaven,
And be what God ordained his chosen priests—
Foes to our sin, but friends to our despair.

BRAGELONE.

Daughter, a heavenly and a welcome duty,
But one most rigid and austere: there is
No composition with our debts of sin.
God claims thy soul; and, lo! his creature there!
Thy choice must be between them—God or man,
Virtue or guilt; a Louis or—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A Louis !

Not mine the poor atonement of the choice ;
I am, myself, the Abandoned One !

BRAGELONE.

I know it ;

Therefore my mission and my ministry.
When he who loved thee died; he bade me wait
The season when the sicklied blight of change
Creeps o'er the bloom of Passion, when the way
Is half prepared by Sorrow to Repentance,
And seek you then,—*he* trusted not in vain :
Perchance an idle hope, but it consoled him.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No, no !—not idle !—in my happiest hours,
When the world smiled, a void was in this heart
The world could never fill : thy brother knew me !

BRAGELONE.

I do believe thee, daughter. Hear me yet ;
My mission is not ended. When thy mother
Lay on the bed of death, (she went before
The sterner heart the same blow broke more slowly,)
As thus she lay, around the swimming walls
Her dim eyes wandered, searching, through the
 shadows,
As if the spirit, half-redeemed from clay,

Could force its will to shape, and, from the darkness,

Body a daughter's image—(nay, be still !)

Thou wert not there ;—alas ! thy shame had murdered

• Even the blessed sadness of that duty !

But o'er that pillow watched a sleepless eye,

And by that couch moved one untiring step,

And o'er that suffering rose a ceaseless prayer ;

And still thy mother's voice, whene'er it called

Upon a daughter—found a son !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O God !

Have mercy on me !

BRAGELONE.

Coldly, through the lattice,
Gleamed the slow dawn, and, from their latest sleep,

Woke the sad eyes it was not *thine* to close !

And, as they fell upon the haggard brow,

And the thin hairs—grown grey, but not by Time—

Of that lone watcher—while upon her heart

Gushed all the memories of the mighty wrecks

Thy guilt had made of what were once the shrines

For Honour, Peace, and God !—that aged woman

(She was a hero's wife) upraised her voice

To curse her child !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Go on !—be kind, and kill me !

BRAGELONE.

Then he, whom thoughts of what he *was* to thee
 Had made her son, arrested on her lips
 The awful doom, and, from the earlier past,
 Invoked a tenderer spell—a holier image ;
 Painted thy gentle, soft, obedient childhood—
 Thy guileless youth, lone state, and strong temp-
 tation ;
 Thy very sin the overflow of thoughts
 From wells whose source was innocence ; and thus
 Sought, with the sunshine of thy maiden spring,
 To melt the ice that lay upon her heart,
 Till all the mother flowed again !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And she ?—

BRAGELONE.

Spoke only once again ! She died—and *blest* thee !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rushing out.*)

No more !—I *can* no more !—my heart is breaking !

BRAGELONE.

The angel hath not left her !—if the plumes
 Have lost the whiteness of their younger glory,
 The wings have still the instinct of the skies,
 And yet shall bear her up !

LOUIS (*without.*)

• We need you not, Sir ;
Ourself will seek the Duchess.

BRAGELONE.

The King's voice !
How my flesh creeps !—my foe, and her destroyer !
The ruthless, heartless—

(*His hand seeks, rapidly and mechanically, for his sword-hilt.*)

Why, why !—where's my sword ?
O Lord ! I do forget myself to dotage :
The soldier, now, is a poor helpless monk,
That hath not even curses ! Satan, hence !
Get thee behind me, Tempter !—There, I'm calm.

SCENE IV.

Louis — Bragelone.

LOUIS.

I can no more hold parley with impatience,
But long to learn how Lauzun's courtship prospers.
She is not here. At prayers, perhaps. The Duchess
Hath grown devout. A friar !—Save you, father !

BRAGELONE.

I thank thee, son.

LOUIS.

He knows me not. Well, Monk,
Are you her Grace's almoner?

BRAGELONE.

Sire, no!

LOUIS.

So short, yet know us?

BRAGELONE.

Sire, I do. You are

The man—

LOUIS.

How, priest!—the *man*!

BRAGELONE.

The word offends you?

The King, who raised a maiden to a Duchess.

That maiden's father was a gallant subject:

Kingly reward!—you made his daughter Duchess.

That maiden's mother was a stainless matron:

Her heart you broke, though mother to a Duchess!

That maiden was affianced from her youth

To one who served you well—nay, saved your life:

His life you robbed of all that gave life value ;
And yet—you made his fair betrothed a Duchess !
You are that King. The world proclaims you
‘ Great ;’

A million warriors bled to buy your laurels ;
A million peasants starved to build Versailles :
Your people famish ; but your court is splendid !
Priests from their pulpits bless your glorious reign ;
Poets have sung the greater than Augustus ;
And painters placed you on immortal canvass,
Limn’d as the Jove whose thunders awe the world :
But to the humble minister of God,
You are the King who has betrayed his trust—
Beggared a nation but to bloat a court,
Seen in men’s lives the pastime to ambition,
Looked but on virtue as the toy for vice ;
And, for the first time, from a subject’s lips,
Now learns the name he leaves to Time and God !

LOUIS.

Add to the bead-roll of that King’s offences
That, when a foul-mouthed Monk assumed the rebel,
The Monster-King forgave him. Hast thou done ?

BRAGELONE.

Your changing hues belie your royal mien ;
Ill the high monarch veils the trembling man !

LOUIS.

Well, you are privileged ! It ne'er was said
The Fourteenth Louis, in his proudest hour,
Bow'd not his sceptre to the Church's crozier.

BRAGELONE.

Alas ! *the Church* ! 'Tis true, this garb of serge
Dares speech that daunts the ermine, and walks free
Where stout hearts tremble in the triple mail.
But wherefore ?—Lies the virtue in the robe,
Which the moth eats ? or in these senseless beads ?
Or in the name of Priest ? The Pharisees
Had priests that gave their Saviour to the cross !
No ! we have high immunity and sanction,
That Truth may teach humanity to Power,
Glide through the dungeon, pierce the armed
throng,
Awaken Luxury on her Sybarite couch,
And, startling souls that slumber on a throne,
Bow kings before that priest of priests—THE CON-
SCIENCE !

LOUIS (*aside.*)

An awful man !—unlike the reverend crew
Who praise my royal virtues in the pulpit,
And—ask for bishoprics when church is over !

BRAGELONE.

This makes us sacred. The profane are they
Honouring the herald while they scorn the mission.
The king who serves the church, yet clings to
mammon,
Who fears the pastor, but forgets the flock,
Who bows before the monitor, and yet
Will ne'er forego the sin, may sink, when age
Palsies the lust and deadens the temptation,
To the priest-ridden, not repentant, dotard,—
For pious hopes hail superstitious terrors,
And seek some sleek Iscariot of the *church*,
To sell salvation for the thirty pieces !

LOUIS (*aside.*)

He speaks as one inspired !

BRAGELONE.

Awake !—awake !
Great though thou art, awake thee from the dream
That earth was made for kings — mankind for
slaughter—
Woman for lust—the People for the Palace !
Dark warnings have gone forth ; along the air
Lingers the crash of the first Charles's throne !
Behold the young, the fair, the haughty king !
The kneeling courtiers, and the flattering priests ;
Lo ! where the palace rose, behold the scaffold—

The crowd—the axe—the headsman—and the
Victim !

Lord of the silver lilies, canst thou tell
If the same fate await not thy descendant !
If some meek son of thine imperial line
May make no brother to yon headless spectre !
And when the sage who saddens o'er the end
Tracks back the causes, tremble, lest he find
The seeds, thy wars, thy pomp, and thy profusion
Sowed in a heartless court and breadless people,
Grew to the tree from which men shaped the
scaffold,—

And the long glare of thy funereal glories
Light unborn monarchs to a ghastly grave !
Beware, proud King ! the Present cries aloud,
A prophet to the Future ! Wake !—beware !

[*Exit Bragelone.*]

LOUIS.

Gone ! Most ill-omened voice and fearful shape !
Scarce seemed it of the earth ; a thing that breathed
But to fulfil some dark and dire behest ;
To appal us, and to vanish.—The quick blood
Halts in my veins. Oh ! never till this hour
Heard I the voice that awed the soul of Louis,
Or met one brow that did not quail before
My kingly gaze ! And this unmitred monk !
I'm glad that none were by.—It was a dream ;

So let its memory like a dream depart.
I am no tyrant—nay, I love my people.
My wars were made but for the fame of France !
My pomp ! why, tush !—what king can play the
hermit ?
My conscience smites me not ; and but last eve
I did confess, and was absolved !—A bigot ;
And half, methinks, a heretic ! I wish
The Jesuits had the probing of his doctrines.
Well, well, 'tis o'er !—What ho, there !

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

LOUIS.

Wine ! Apprise
Once more the Duchess of our presence.—Stay !
Yon monk, what doth he here ?

GENTLEMAN.

I know not, Sire,
Nor saw him till this day.

LOUIS.

Strange !—Wine !

[Exit Gentleman.]

SCENE V.

Duchess de la Vallière—Louis.

LOUIS.

Well, Madam,
We've tarried long your coming, and meanwhile
Have found your proxy in a madman monk,
Whom, for the future, we would pray you spare us.

(Re-enter Gentleman with wine.)

So, so! the draught restores us. Fair La Vallière,
Make not yon holy man your confessor;
You'll find small comfort in his lectures.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire,

His meaning is more kindly than his manner.
I pray you, pardon him.

LOUIS.

Ay, ay! No more;
Let's think of him no more. You had, this morn,
A courtlier visitant, methinks—De Lauzun?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes, Sire.

LOUIS.

A smooth and gallant gentleman.
You're silent. Silence is assent;—'tis well!

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Down, my full heart! the Duke declares your wish
Is that—that I should bind this broken heart
And—no! I cannot speak—

(*With great and sudden energy.*)

You wish me wed, Sire?

LOUIS.

'Twere best that you should wed; and yet, De
Lauzun
Is scarce the happiest choice.—But as thou wilt.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Twere best that I should wed!—thou saidst it,
Louis;
Say it once more!

LOUIS.

In honesty, I think so.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My choice is made, then—I obey the fiat,
And will become a bride!

LOUIS.

The Duke has sped!
I trust he loves thyself, and not thy dower.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The Duke ! what, hast thou read so ill this soul
That thou couldst deem thus meanly of that book
Whose every page was bared to thee ? A bitter
Lot has been mine—and this sums up the measure.
Go, Louis ! go !—All glorious as thou art—
Earth's Agamemnon—the great king of men—
Thou wert not worthy of this woman's heart !

LOUIS.

Her passion moves me !—Then your choice has
fallen
Upon a nobler bridegroom ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE,

Sire, it hath !

LOUIS.

May I demand that choice ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Too soon thou'lt learn it.

Not yet ! Ah me !

LOUIS.

Nay, sigh not, my sweet Duchess.
Speak not so sadly. What, though love hath past,
Friendship remains ; and still my fondest hope
Is to behold thee happy. Come !—thy hand ;
Let us be friends ! We are so !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Friends !—No more !

So, it hath come to this ! I am contented !

Yes—we are friends !

LOUIS.

And when your choice is made,
You will permit your friend to hail your bridals ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, when my choice is made !

LOUIS.

This poor De Lauzun
Hath then no chance ? I'm glad of it, and thus
Seal our new bond of friendship on your hand.
Adieu!—and Heaven protect you !

[Exit Louis.]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*gazing after him.*)

Heaven hath *heard* thee,
And in this last most cruel, but most gracious,
Proof of thy coldness, breaks the lingering chain
That bound my soul to earth.

(Enter Bragelone.)

O holy father !

Brother to him whose grave my guilt prepared,

Witness my firm resolve, support my struggles,
And guide me back to Virtue through Repentance !

BRAGELONE.

Pause, ere thou dost decide.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I've paused too long,
And now, impatient of this weary load,
Sigh for repose.

BRAGELONE.

Oh, Heaven, receive her back !
Through the wide earth, the sorrowing dove hath
 flown,
And found no haven ; weary though her wing
And sullied with the dust of lengthened travail,
Now let her flee away and be at rest !
The peace that man has broken—THOU restore
Whose holiest name is FATHER !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hear us, Heaven !

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Gardens at Versailles.

Enter Madame de Montespan, Grammont, and Courtiers.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

So she has fled from court—the saintly Duchess ;
A convent's grate must shield this timorous virtue.
Methinks they're not so many to assail it !
Well, trust me, one short moon of fast and penance
Will bring us back the recreant novice——

GRAMMONT.

And

End the eventful comedy by marriage.
Lauzun against the world were even odds ;
But Lauzun *with* the world—what saint can stand
it ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Lauzun !—the traitor ! What ! to give my rival
The triumph to reject the lawful love
Of him whose lawless passion first betrayed me !

GRAMMONT.

Talk of the devil ! Humph—you know the proverb.

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Good day, my friends. Your pardon, Madam ; I
Thought 'twas the sun that blinded me.—(*Aside.*)
Athenè !
Pray you, a word.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

(*Aloud, and turning away disdainfully.*)

We're not at leisure, Duke.

LAUZUN.

Ha ! (*Aside.*) Nay, Athenè, spare your friend these
graces.
Forget your state one moment ; have you asked
The King the office that you undertook
To make my own ? My creditors are urgent.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aloud.*)

No, my Lord Duke, I have not asked the King !
I grieve to hear your fortunes are so broken,
And that your honoured and august device,
To mend them by your marriage, failed.

GRAMMONT.

She hits him
Hard on the hip. Ha, ha !—the poor De Lauzun !

LAUZUN.

Sir !—Nay, I'm calm !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Pray, may we dare to ask
How long you've loved the Duchess ?

LAUZUN.

Ever since
You were her friend and confidante.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You're bitter.
Perchance you deem your love a thing to boast of.

LAUZUN.

To boast of !—Yes ! 'Tis something ev'n to love
The only woman Louis ever *honoured* !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*laying her hand on Lauzun's arm.*)

Insolent ! You shall rue this ! If I speak
Your name to Louis, coupled with a favour,
The suit shall be your banishment !

[*Exit Madame de Montespan.*

FIRST COURTIER.

Let's follow.

Ha ! ha !—Dear Duke, your game, I fear, is lost !
You've played the knave, and thrown away the
king.

COURTIERS.

Ha ! ha !—Adieu !

[*Exeunt.*

LAUZUN.

Ha ! ha !—the devil take you !

SCENE II.

Enter to Lauzun the Marquis de Montespan.

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

My wife's not here! that's well! We're not to speak ;
But, when we meet, I bow—she smiles politely.
A hundred thousand crowns for being civil
To one another! Well now, that's a thing
That happens but to Marquises. It shews
My value in the state! The King esteems
My comfort of such consequence to France,
He pays me down a hundred thousand crowns
Rather than let my wife disturb my temper!
Lauzun! Aha! he seems as something crossed him.
I will console him. Duke, I'm ravish'd!

LAUZUN.

Damn you!

MONTESPAN.

Damn *me*! What! damn a Marquis! Heaven
would think
Twice of it, Sir, before it damn'd a man
Of *my* rank! Damn a Marquis! there's religion!
[*Exit Montespan.*]

LAUZUN.

So, she would ruin me ! Fore-armed—fore-warned !
 I have the King's ear yet, and know some secrets
 That could destroy her ! Since La Vallière's flight,
 Louis grows sad and thoughtful, and looks cold
 On her vain rival, who too coarsely shews
 The world the stuff court ladies' hearts are made of.
 She will undo herself—and I will help her.
 Weave on thy web, false Montespan, weave on ;
 The bigger spider shall devour the smaller.
 The war's declared—'tis clear that one must fall :—
 I'll be polite—the *Lady* to the wall !

[*Exit Lauzun.*]

SCENE III.

*Sunset—the old Chateau of La Vallière—the Convent
 of the Carmelites at a distance—the same scene as
 that with which the play opens.*

*Enter the Duchess de La Vallière and Bragelone from
 the Chateau.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Once more, ere yet I take farewell of earth,
 I see mine old, familiar, maiden home !
 All how unchanged !—the same the hour, the scene,

The very season of the year !—the stillness
Of the smooth wave—the stillness of the trees,
Where the winds sleep like dreams !—and, oh ! the
calm

Of the blue heavens around yon holy spires,
Pointing, like gospel truths, through calm and storm,
To man's great home !

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Oh ! how the years recede !
Upon this spot I spoke to her of love,
And dreamt of bliss for earth !

(*The vesper-bell tolls.*)

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hark ! the deep sound,
That seems a voice from some invisible spirit,
Claiming the world for God.—When last I heard it
Hallow this air, here stood my mother, living ;
And I—was then a mother's *pride* !—and yonder
Came thy brave brother in his glittering mail ;
And—ah ! these thoughts are bitter !—were he
living
How would he scorn them !

BRAGELONE (*who has been greatly agitated.*)

No !—ah, no !—thou wrong'st him !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yet, were he living, could I but receive
From his own lips my pardon, and his blessing,
My soul would deem one dark memorial rased
Out of the page most blistered with its tears !

BRAGELONE.

Then have thy wish ! and in these wrecks of man
Worn to decay, and rent by many a storm,
Survey the worm the world called Bragelone.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Avaunt !—avaunt !—I dream !—the dead returned
To earth to mock me !—No ! this hand is warm !
I have one murther less upon my soul.
I thank thee, Heaven !—(*swoons.*)

BRAGELONE (*supporting her.*)

The blow strikes home ; and yet
What is my life to her ? Louise !—She moves not ;
She does not breathe ; how still she sleeps !—I saw
her
Sleep in her mother's arms, and then, in sleep
She smiled. *There's no smile now !*—poor child !
One kiss !
It is a brother's kiss—it has no guilt ;

Kind Heaven, it has no guilt.—I have survived
All earthlier thoughts : her crime, my vows, effaced
them.

A brother's kiss !—Away! I'm human still ;
I thought I had been stronger ; God forgive me !
Awake, Louise !—awake! She breathes once more ;
The spell is broke ; the marble warms to life !
And I—freeze back to stone !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I heard a voice.
That cried ' Louise!'—Speak, speak !—my sense is
dim,
And struggles darkly with a blessed ray
That shot from heaven.—My shame hath not de-
stroy'd thee !

BRAGELONE.

No !—life might yet serve *thee* !—and I lived on
Dead to all else. I took the vows, and then,
Ere yet I laid me down, and bade the Past
Fade like a ghost before the dawn of heaven,
One sacred task was left.—If love was dust,
Love, like ourselves, hath an immortal soul,
That doth survive whate'er it takes from clay ;
And that—the holier part of love—became
A thing to watch thy steps—a guardian spirit

To hover round, disguised, unknown, undream'd of,
To soothe the sorrow, to redeem the sin,
And lead thy soul to peace !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O bright revenge !
Love strong as death, and nobler far than woman's !

BRAGELONE.

To *peace*—ah, let me deem so !—the mute cloister,
The spoken ritual, and the solemn veil,
Are nought themselves ;—the Huguenot abjures
The monkish cell, but breathes, perchance, the
prayer

That speeds as quick to the Eternal Throne !
In our own souls must be the solitude ;
In our own thoughts the sanctity !—'Tis *then*
The feeling that our vows have built the wall
Passion can storm not, nor temptation sap,
Gives calm its charter, roots out wild regret,
And makes the heart the world-disdaining cloister.
This—this is peace ! but pause, if in thy breast
Linger the wish of earth. Alas ! all oaths
Are vain, if nature shudders to record them—
The subtle spirit 'scapes the sealed vessel !
The false devotion is the true despair !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Fear not !—I feel 'tis not the walls of stone,
 Told beads, nor murmured hymns, that bind the
 heart,
 Or exorcise the world ; the spell's the thought
 That where most weak we've banished the tempta-
 tion,
 And reconciled, what earth would still divide,
 The human memories and the immortal conscience.

BRAGELONE.

Doubt fades before thine accents. On the day
 That gives thee to the veil we'll meet once more.
 Let mine be man's last blessing in this world.
 Oh ! tell me, then, thou'rt happier than thou hast
 been ;
 And when we part, I'll seek some hermit cell
 Beside the walls that compass thee, and prayer,
 Morning and night, shall join our souls in heaven.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes, generous spirit ! think not that my future
 Shall be repining as the past. Thou livest,
 And conscience smiles again. The shattered bark
 Glides to its haven. Joy ! the land is near.

[Exit Duchess de la Vallière into the Chateau.]

BRAGELONE.

So, it is past!—the secret is disclosed!
 The hand she did reject on earth has led her
 To holier ties. I have not lived in vain!
 Yet who had dreamed, when through the ranks of
 war

Went the loud shout of “France and Bragelone!”
 That the monk’s cowl would close on all my
 laurels?

A never-heard philosopher is Life!—
 Our happiest hours are sleep’s;—and sleep pro-
 claims,

Did we but listen to its warning voice,
 That REST is earth’s elixir. Why, then, pine
 That, ere our years grow feverish with their toil,
 Too weary-worn to find the rest they sigh for,
 We learn betimes THE MORAL OF REPOSE?
 I will lie down, and sleep away this world.
 The pause of care, the slumber of tired passion,
 Why, why defer till night is well nigh spent?
 When the brief sun that gilt the landscape sets,
 When o’er the music on the leaves of life
 Chill silence falls, and every fluttering hope
 That voiced the world with song has gone to roost,
 Then let thy soul, from the poor labourer, learn
 ‘Sleep’s sweetest taken soonest!’

*(As he moves away, his eye falls upon a glove dropped
 by the Duchess de la Vallière—he takes it up.)*

And this hath touched her hand !—it were a comfort
To hoard a single relic !

(Kisses the glove, and then suddenly dropping it)

No !—'tis sinful !

[Exit Bragelone.]

SCENE IV.

*The exterior of the Gothic Convent of the Carmelites—
The windows illumined—Music heard from within—
A crowd without—Enter Courtiers, Ladies, Priests,
&c., and pass through the door of the Chapel, in the
centre of the building.*

*Enter Lauzun from a door in the side wing of the
Convent—To him, Grammont.*

LAUZUN.

Where hast thou left the king ?

GRAMMONT.

Not one league hence

LAUZUN.

Ere the clock strikes, La Vallière takes the veil.

GRAMMONT.

Great Heaven ! so soon !—and Louis sent me on,
To learn how thou hadst prospered with the Duchess.
He is so sanguine—this imperious King,
Who never heard a “ No ” from living lips !
How did she take his letter ?

LAUZUN.

In sad silence ;
Then mused a little while, and some few tears
Stole down her cheeks, as, with a trembling hand,
She gave me back the scroll.

GRAMMONT.

You mean her answer.

LAUZUN.

No ; the King’s letter. “ Tell him that I thank
him ; ”
(Such were her words ;) “ but that my choice is
made ;
And ev’n this last assurance of his love
I dare not keep : ’tis only when I pray,
That I may think of him. This is my answer.”

GRAMMONT.

No more ?—no written word ?

LAUZUN.

None, Grammont. Then
She rose and left me ; and I heard the bell
Calling the world to see a woman scorn it.

GRAMMONT.

The King will never brook it. He will grasp her
Back from this yawning tomb of living souls.
The news came on him with such sudden shock ;
The long noviciate thus abridged ; and she—
Ever so waxen to his wayward will !—
She cannot yet be marble.

LAUZUN.

Wronged affection
Makes many a Niobe from tears. Haste, Gram-
mont,
Back to the King, and bid him fly to save,
Or nerve his heart to lose, her. I will follow,—
My *second* charge fulfilled.

GRAMMONT.

And what is that ?

LAUZUN.

Revenge and justice !—Go !

[*Exit Grammont.*

LAUZUN (*looking down the stage*)

I hear her laugh—
I catch the glitter of her festive robe !
Athenè comes to triumph—and to tremble !

SCENE V.

Madame de Montespan, Courtiers, and Lauzun.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Now for the crowning cup of sparkling fortune !
A rarer pearl than Egypt's queen dissolved
I have immersed in that delicious draught,
A woman's triumph o'er a fairer rival !
(*As she turns to enter the convent, she perceives Lauzun.*)
What ! you here, Duke ?

LAUZUN.

Ay, Madam ; I've not ye
To thank you for—my banishment !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The Ides
Of March are come—not over !

LAUZUN.

Are they not ?
For some they may be ! You are here to witness—

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

My triumph !

LAUZUN.

And to take a *friend's* condolence.
I bear this letter from the King !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The King !

(*Reads the letter.*)

“ We do not blame you ; blame belongs to love,
And love had nought with you.”—What ! what ! I
tremble !

“ The Duke de Lauzun, of these lines the bearer,
Confirms their purport : from our royal court
We do excuse your presence.” Banished, Duke ?
Is that the word ?—What, banished !

LAUZUN.

Hush !—you mar
The holy silence of the place. 'Tis true ;
You read aright. Our gracious King permits you
To quit Versailles. Versailles is not the world.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perdition !—banished !

LAUZUN.

You can take the veil.
Meanwhile, enjoy *your triumph* !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Triumph !—Ah !
She triumphs o'er me to the last. My soul
Finds hell on earth—and hers makes earth a
heaven !

LAUZUN.

Hist !—will you walk within ?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

O, hateful world !
What !—hath it come to this ?

LAUZUN.

You spoil your triumph !

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Lauzun, I thank thee !—thank thee—thank—and
curse thee !

[Exit Madame de Montespan.]

LAUZUN (*looking after her with a subdued laugh.*)

Ha, ha !—the *broken* heart can know no pang
Like that which racks the *bad* heart when its sting
Poisons itself. Now, then, away to Louis.
The bell still tolls : there's time. This soft La
Vallière !

The only thing that ever baffled Lauzun,
And felt not his revenge !—revenge, poor soul !
Revenge upon a dove !—she shall be saved
From the pale mummies of yon Memphian vault,
Or the great Louis will be less than man,—
Or that fond sinner will be more than woman.

[Exit Lauzun.]

SCENE VI.

*The interior of the Chapel of the Carmelite Convent—
On the foreground, Courtiers, Ladies, &c.—At the
back of the stage, the altar, only partially seen through
the surrounding throng — The Officials pass to
and fro, swinging the censers—The stage darkened—
Lights suspended along the aisle, and tapers by the
altar.*

*(As the Scene opens, solemn music, to which is chaunted
the following—)*

HYMN.

Come from the world, O weary soul,
For run the race and near the goal !
Flee from the net, O lonely dove,
Thy nest is built the clouds above !
Turn, wild and worn with panting fear,
And slake thy thirst, thou wounded deer,
In Jordan's holy springs !
Arise ! O fearful soul, arise !
For broke the chain and calm the skies !
As moths fly upward to the star,
The light allures thee from afar.
Though earth is lost, and space is wide,
The smile of God shall be thy guide,
And Faith and Hope thy wings !

(As the Hymn ends, Bragelone enters, and stands apart in the background.)

FIRST COURTIER.

Three minutes more, and earth has lost La Vallière !

SECOND COURTIER.

So young !—so fair !

THIRD COURTIER.

'Twas whispered, that the King
Would save her yet !

FIRST COURTIER.

What ! snatch her from the altar ?
He durst not, man !

Enter Louis, Grammont, and Lauzun.

LOUIS.

Hold ! we forbid the rites !
(As the King advances hastily up the aisle, Bragelone places himself before him.)

Back, monk ! revere the presence of the King !

BRAGELONE.

And thou the palace of the King of kings !

LOUIS.

Dotard ! we claim our subject.

BRAGELONE.

She hath past
The limit of your realm. Ye priests of God,
Complete your solemn task !—The church's curse
Hangs on the air. Descendant of Saint Louis,
Move—and the avalanche falls !

*(The Duchess de la Vallière, still drest in the bridal
and gorgeous attire assumed before the taking
of the veil, descends from the altar.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No, holy friend !
I need it not ; my soul is my protector.
Nay, thou mayst trust me.

BRAGELONE *(after a pause.)*

Thou art right.—I trust thee ?

LOUIS.

*(Leading the Duchess de la Vallière to the front of
the stage.)*

Thou hast not ta'en the veil ?—Ev'n Time had
mercy.
Thou art saved !—thou art saved !—to love—to life !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah, Sire !

LOUIS.

Call me not Sire !—forget that dreary time
When thou wert Duchess, and myself the King.
Fly back, fly back, to those delicious hours
When *I* was but thy lover and thy Louis !
And thou my dream—my bird—my fairy flower—
My violet, shrinking in the modest shade
Until transplanted to this breast—to haunt
The common air with odours ! Oh, Louise !
Hear me !—the fickle lust of change allured me,
The pride thy virtues wounded armed against
thee,
Until I dreamed I loved thyself no longer ;
But now this dread resolve, this awe of parting,
Re-binds me to thee—bares my soul before me—
Dispels the lying mists that veiled thine image,
And tells me that I never loved but thee !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am not then despised !—thou lov'st me still !
And when I pray for thee, my heart may feel
That it hath nothing to forgive !

LOUIS.

Louise !

Thou dost renounce this gloomy purpose ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Never !

It is not gloomy !—think'st thou it is gloom
To feel that, as my soul becomes more pure,
Heaven will more kindly listen to the prayers
That rise for *thee* ?—is that thought *gloom*, my
Louis ?

LOUIS.

Oh ! slay me not with tenderness ! Return !
And if thy conscience startle at my love,
Be still my friend—my angel !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am weak,
But, in the knowledge of my weakness, strong !
I could not breathe the air that's sweet with thee,
Nor cease to love !—in flight my only safety ;
And were that flight not made by solemn vows
Eternal, it were bootless ; for the wings
Of my wild soul know but two bournes to speed to—
Louis and Heaven ! And, oh ! in Heaven at last
My soul, unsinching, may unite with Louis !

LOUIS.

I do implore thee !—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No ; thou canst not tempt me !
My *heart* already is the nun.

LOUIS.

Thou know'st not
I have dismissed thy rival from the court.
Return !—though mine no more, at least thy Louis
Shall know no second love !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What ! wilt thou, Louis,
Renounce for me eternally my rival,
And live alone for——

LOUIS.

Thee ! Louise, I swear it !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*raising her arms to
Heaven.*)

Father ! at length, I dare to hope for pardon,
For now remorse may prove itself sincere !
Bear witness, Heaven ! I never loved this man
So well as now ! and never seemed *his* love
Built on so sure a rock ! Upon thine altar
I lay the offering. I revoke the past ;

For Louis, Heaven was left—and now I leave
 Louis, when tenfold more beloved, for Heaven !
 Ah ! pray with me ! Be ~~this~~ our latest token—
 This memory of sweet moments—sweet, though
 sinless !
 Ah ! pray with me ! that I may live till death
 The thought—‘we prayed together for forgiveness!’

LOUIS.

Oh ! wherefore never knew I till this hour
 The treasure I shall lose ! I dare not call thee
 Back from the Heaven where thou art half already !
 Thy soul demands celestial destinies,
 And stoops no more to earth. Be thine the peace,
 And mine the penance ! Yet these awful walls,
 The rigid laws of this severest order,
 Yon spectral shapes, this human sepulchre,—
 And thou, the soft, the delicate, the highborn,
 The adored delight of Europe’s mightiest king,—
 Thou canst not bear it !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I have borne much worse—
Thy change and thy desertion !—Let it pass !
 There is no terror in the things without ;
 Our souls alone the palace or the prison ;
 And the one thought, that I have fled from sin

Will fill the cell with images more glorious,
And haunt its silence with a mightier music,
Than ever thronged illumined halls, or broke
From harps by mortal strung !

LOUIS.

I will not hear thee !
I cannot brave these thoughts. Thy angel voice
But tells me what a sun of heavenly beauty
Glides from the earth, and leaves my soul to
darkness.

This is *my* work !—'twas I for whom that soul
Forsook its native element ; for me,
Sorrow consumed thy youth, and conscience gnawed
That patient, tender, unreproachful heart.
And now this crowns the whole ! the priest—the
altar—

The sacrifice—the victim ! Touch me not !
Speak not ! I am unmann'd enough already.
I—I—I choke ! These tears—let them speak for me.
Now ! now thy hand—O, God ! farewell, for ever !

[*Exit Louis.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

For ever ! till the angel's trump shall wake
Affection from the grave. Ah ! blessed thought.
For ever ! that's no word for earth ; but angels

Shall cry 'for ever' when we meet again :
Be firm, my heart, be firm !

(After a pause, turning to Bragelone, with a slight smile.)

'Tis past ! we've conquered !

*(The Duchess de la Vallière re-ascends to the altar—
the crowd close around.)*

Music.

CHORUS.

Hark ! to the nuptial train are opened wide
The Eternal Gates. Hosanna to the bride !

GRAMMONT.

She has ta'en the veil—the last dread rite is done.

ABBESS *(from the altar.)*

Sister Louise ! before the eternal grate
Becomes thy barrier from the living world,
It is allowed thee once more to behold
The face of men, and bid farewell to friendship.

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

Why do I shudder ? why shrinks back my being
From our last gaze, like Nature from the Grave ?
One moment, and one look, and o'er her image

Thick darkness falls, till Death, that morning star,
Heralds immortal day. I hear her steps
Treading the mournful silence ; o'er my soul
Pauses the freezing time. O Lord, support me !
One effort more—one effort !—Wake, my soul !
'Tis thy last trial ; wilt thou play the craven ?

*(The crowd give way, the Duchess de la Vallière, in
the habit of the Carmelite nuns, passes down the
steps of the altar, led by the Abbess—As she pauses
to address those whom she recognises in the crowd,
the chorus chaunts)—*

Sister, look and speak thy last,
From the world thou'rt dying fast ;
While farewell to life thou'rt giving,
Dead already to the living.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE *(coming to the front of
the stage, sees Lauzun.)*

Lauzun ! thou serv'st a King, whate'er his faults,
Who merits all thy homage : honour—love him.
His glory needs no friendship ; but in sickness,
Or sorrow, *kings* need love. Be faithful, Lauzun !
And, far from thy loud world ; one lowly voice
Shall not forget thee.

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

All the strife is hushed !

THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE [AT DISTANCE]

My heart's wild sea has made me the waves
The harbour waits.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE *approaching Augustine*
and meeting it now.

And now in friend and father
Bless the poor Son

ANGELINE

As Duchess of La Valliere
Thou wert not happy, is the Carmeline Sister.
Say—art thou happy?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE

Yes

ANGELINE *lapping his hand in her hand*

O Father, bless her!

CHOIRS

Glark! in heaven is mirth:

Jubilate:

Good leaves guilt on earth:

Jubilate:

Joy the sin forgiven:

Jubilate:

Come, O Bride of Heaven:

Jubilate:

Curtain falls slowly.

END.

EPILOGUE,
TO BE
SPOKEN IN THE CHARACTER
OF
THE MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

DAMN *me* !—What, damn a Marquis ! there's a phrase
That's only fit for peasants, or for plays !

A Marquis damn'd !—the gods will never do it
While authors live ;—I hear they're brought up to it.
But folks still talk of what runs in their head !—
Methinks, I see some persons better bred :—
Ah ! if your hearts one kindly impulse touches,
You will not damn the Marquis—nor the Duchess !

Far from so harsh a fate, you all must know,

Though born about two hundred years ago,

• Though, at the court of LOUIS, called ' THE GREAT,'

My pension proves how well I served the state ;

Yet *I* alone, of all my age, survive,

My Portia's gone—still Brutus is alive !

Strange changes, gentlemen, methinks have been

Since Pomp and Louis walk'd the living scene.

When I was young, were Dukes inclined to roam,—

Six horses bore them half a mile from home ;

But now a Duke takes journeys to the moon,

And steps his half a mile from a balloon !

Once, from the state when honest folks could squeeze,

Like me, a competence, they lived at ease !

But now, all men, no matter what their stations,

Run after things called—' tempting speculations !'

My heart's wild sea lies mute, and o'er the waves
The Saviour walks.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*approaching Bragelone,
and kneeling to him.*)

And now, oh ! friend and father,
Bless the poor Nun !

BRAGELONE.

As Duchess of La Vallière
Thou wert not happy ; as the Carmelite Sister,
Say—*art* thou happy ?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes !

BRAGELONE (*laying his hand on her head.*)

O Father, bless her !

CHORUS.

Hark ! in heaven is mirth !

Jubilate !

Grief leaves guilt on earth !

Jubilate !

Joy for sin forgiven !

Jubilate !

Come, O Bride of Heaven !

Jubilate !

Curtain falls slowly.

END.

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But now, all men, no matter what their stations,
Run after things called—'tempting speculations!'

EPILOGUE.

Tell me, my friends, (it puzzles *my* invention,)
How, with most profit, to invest MY PENSION !
I like not land—one never gets one's rent ;
Stocks ?—who the deuce can live on two per cent. ?
But, Heaven be thanked, there are, to cheer one's vapours,
Some famous speculations—in the papers !

(*Takes out a newspaper.*)

First of the many modes the wind to raise,
“Forty per cent.—new nine-wheeled *Cabriolets* !”
“Railway to Gretna Green, ten miles a minute,
Five pounds-a-share-deposit !”—Catch me in it !
“Grand Caoutchouc Co. !” (Ah, hard words catch the
lubber,)

For making gateposts out of Indian rubber.
New banks that pay you three per cent. !—I see—
They grab your hundred, and return you three !
All are called Companies—all call for cash,
And all make bubbles, if they make a splash.
Nay, when you've gone the round of all the rest,
You've still, I find, your body to invest ;
And a new company your bones will bury
In that gay spec—THE LONDON CEMETERY !
Well, well ! let other flies be caught by honey,
These gully-plots shall never catch my money ;—
Brisk though the wind, I'll just heave out the anchor,
And, gad, I'll keep my pension with my banker.

How I run on !—excuse this idle chatter,
But pensions, now, are such a ticklish matter !
You seem delightful persons, I declare ;
Pray come again—don't drive us to *despair* !
What though the convent has our Duchess captured,
Forgive her faults—and she'll be charmed, enraptured !

RICHELIEU;

OR,

THE CONSPIRACY:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

HISTORICAL ODES

ON

THE LAST DAYS OF ELIZABETH;

CROMWELL'S DREAM;

THE DEATH OF NELSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "LADY OF LYONS,"

"EUGENE ARAM," &C.

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1839.

“ Le Comte de Soissons, et le Duc de Bouillon, avaient une bonne armée, et ils savaient la conduire; et pour plus grande sûreté, tandis que cette armée devait s'avancer, on devait assassiner le Cardinal et faire soulever Paris Les Conjurés faisaient un traité avec l'Espagne pour introduire des troupes en France, et pour y mettre tout en confusion dans une Régence qu'on croyait prochaine, et dont chacun espérait profiter Richelieu avait perdu toute sa faveur, et ne conservait que l'avantage d'être nécessaire. Le bonheur du Cardinal voulut encore que le complot fut découvert, et qu'une copie du traité lui tombât entre les mains.”—*Voltaire, Hist. Gen.*

TO THE MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE, K.G.,

&c. &c.

THIS DRAMA AND THE ACCOMPANYING ODES

ARE INSCRIBED, IN TRIBUTE

TO THE TALENTS WHICH COMMAND,

AND

THE QUALITIES WHICH ENDEAR,

RESPECT.

London, March 5, 1839.



from
M. de Miran—

PREFACE TO RICHELIEU.

THE administration of Cardinal Richelieu, whom (despite all his darker qualities) Voltaire and History justly consider the true architect of the French monarchy, and the great parent of French civilization, is characterised by features alike tragic and comic. A weak king—an ambitious favourite; a despicable conspiracy against the minister, nearly always associated with a dangerous treason against the State—These, with little variety of names and dates, constitute the eventful cycle through which, with a dazzling ease, and an arrogant confidence, the great luminary fulfilled its destinies. Blent together, in startling contrast, we see the grandest achievements and the pettiest agents ;—the spy—the mistress—the capuchin ;—the destruction of feudalism ;—the humiliation of Austria ;—the dismemberment of Spain.

Richelieu himself is still what he was in his

own day—a man of two characters. If, on the one hand, he is justly represented as inflexible and vindictive, crafty and unscrupulous ; so, on the other, it cannot be denied that he was placed in times in which the long impunity of every license required stern examples—that he was beset by perils and intrigues, which gave a certain excuse to the subtlest inventions of self-defence—that his ambition was inseparably connected with a passionate love for the glory of his country—and that, if he was her dictator, he was not less her benefactor. It has been fairly remarked, by the most impartial historians, that he was no less generous to merit than severe to crime—that, in the various departments of the State, the Army, and the Church, he selected and distinguished the ablest aspirants—that the wars which he conducted were, for the most part, essential to the preservation of France, and Europe itself, from the formidable encroachments of the Austrian House—that, in spite of those wars, the people were not oppressed with exorbitant imposts—and that he left the kingdom he had governed in a more flourishing and vigorous state than at any former period of the French history, or at the decease of Louis XIV.

The cabals formed against this great statesman were not carried on by the patriotism of public virtue, or the emulation of equal talent: they were but court struggles, in which the most worthless agents had recourse to the most desperate means. In each, as I have before observed, we see combined the twofold attempt to murder the minister and to betray the country. Such, then, are the agents, and such the designs, with which truth, in the Drama as in History, requires us to contrast the celebrated Cardinal;—not disguising his foibles or his vices, but not unjust to the grander qualities (especially the love of country), by which they were often dignified, and, at times, redeemed.

The historical drama is the concentration of historical events. In the attempt to place upon the stage the picture of an era, that license with dates and details, which Poetry permits, and which the highest authorities in the Drama of France herself, have sanctioned, has been, though not unsparingly, indulged. The conspiracy of the Duc de Bouillon is, for instance, amalgamated with the dénouement of *The Day of Dupes* ;* and circum-

* Le Cardinal se croit perdu, et prepare sa retraite. Ses amis lui conseillent de tenter ~~enfin~~ auprès du roi un nouvel effort. Le Cardinal va trouver le ~~roi~~ à Versailles. Le Roi qui avait sacrifié son Ministre par faiblesse, se remit par faiblesse entre ses mains, et il

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA,

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN,

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1839.

MEN.

LOUIS THE THIRTEENTH	.	.	MR. ELTON.
GASTON, DUKE OF ORLEANS, <i>brother to Louis XIII.</i>	.	.	MR. DIDDEAR.
BARADAS, <i>Favourite of the King, first gentleman of the Chamber, Premier Ecuyer, &c.</i>	.	.	MR. WARDE.
CARDINAL RICHELIEU	.	.	MR. MACREADY.
THE CHEVALIER DE MAUPRAT	.	.	MR. ANDERSON.
THE SIEUR DE BERINGHEN (<i>in attendance on the King,* one of the Conspirators</i>)			MR. VINING.
JOSEPH, <i>a Capuchin, Richelieu's confidant</i>			MR. PHELPS.
HUGUET, <i>an officer of Richelieu's household guard—a Spy</i>	.	.	MR. GEORGE BENNETT.
FRANÇOIS, <i>first Page to Richelieu</i>	.		MR. HOWE.
<i>First Courtier</i>	.	.	MR. ROBERTS.
<i>Captain of the Archers</i>	.	.	MR. MATTHEWS.
<i>First,</i>	} <i>Secretaries of State</i>	.	MR. TILBURY.
<i>Second,</i>		.	MR. YARNOLD.
<i>Third</i>		.	MR. PAYNE.
<i>Governor of the Bastile</i>	.	.	MR. WALDRON.
<i>Gaoler</i>	.	.	MR. AYLIFFE.
<i>Courtiers, Pages, Conspirators, Officers, Soldiers, &c.</i>			

WOMEN.

JULIE DE MORTEMAR, <i>an Orphan, Ward to Richelieu</i>	.	.	MISS HELEN FAUCIT.
MARION DE LORME, <i>Mistress to Orleans, but in Richelieu's pay</i>	.	.	MISS CHARLES.

* Properly speaking, the King's First Valet de Chambre, a post of great importance at that time.

RICHELIEU;

OR,

THE CONSPIRACY.

ACT I.

First Day.

SCENE I.

A room in the house of Marion de Lorme; a table towards the front of the stage (with wine, fruits, &c.), at which are seated Baradas, Four Courtiers, splendidly dressed in the costume of 1641-2;—the Duke of Orleans reclining on a large fauteuil;—Marion de Lorme, standing at the back of his chair, offers him a goblet, and then retires. At another table, De Beringhen, De Mauprat, playing at dice; other Courtiers, of inferior rank to those at the table of the Duke, looking on.

ORLEANS (*drinking*).

HERE's to our enterprise!—

BARADAS (*glancing at Marion*).

Hush, Sir!—

ORLEANS (*aside*).

Nay, Count,

You may trust her; she doats on me; no house
So safe as Marion's.* At our statelier homes
The very walls do play the eaves-dropper.
There's not a sunbeam creeping o'er our floors
But seems a glance from that malignant eye
Which reigns o'er France; our fatal greatness lives
In the sharp glare of one relentless day.
But Richelieu's self forgets to fear the sword
The myrtle hides; and Marion's silken robe
Casts its kind charity o'er fiercer sins
Than those which haunt the rosy path between

10

* Omitted in representation, from "At our statelier homes," line 3, to the end of speech line 13.

The lip and eye of beauty.—Oh, no house
So safe as Marion's.

BARADAS.

Still, we have a secret,
And oil and water—woman and a secret—
Are hostile properties.

ORLEANS.

Well—Marion, see
How the play prospers yonder.

*Marion goes to the next table, looks on for a few moments,
then Exit.*

BARADAS (*producing a parchment*).

I have now
All the conditions drawn ; it only needs
Our signatures : upon receipt of this, 20
(Whereto is joined the schedule of our treaty
With the Count-Duke,* the Richelieu of the Escorial,)
Bouillon will join his army with the Spaniard,
March on to Paris,—there, dethrone the King :
You will be Regent ; I, and ye, my Lords,
Form the new Council. So much for the core
Of our great scheme.

ORLEANS.

But Richelieu is an Argus ;
One of his hundred eyes will light upon us,
And then—good bye to life.

BARADAS.

To gain the prize
We must destroy the Argus :—ay, my Lords,
The scroll the core, but blood must fill the veins, 30
Of our design ;—while this despatched to Bouillon,
Richelieu despatched to Heaven !—The last *my* charge
Meet here to-morrow night. *You*, Sir, as first
In honour and in hope, meanwhile select
Some trusty knave to bear the scroll to Bouillon ;
Midst Richelieu's foes *I'll* find some desperate hand
To strike for vengeance, while we stride to power.

ORLEANS.

So be it ;—to-morrow, midnight.—Come, my Lords.

*Exeunt Orleans, and the Courtiers in his train. Those at
the other table rise, salute Orleans, and re-seat themselves.*

* Olivares, Minister of Spain.

DE BERINGHEN.

Double the stakes.

DE MAUPRAT.

Done.

DE BERINGHEN.

Bravo ; faith it shames me

To bleed a purse already *in extremis*.

40

DE MAUPRAT.

Nay, as you've had the patient to yourself
So long, no other doctor should despatch it.

De Mauprat throws and loses.

OMNES.

Lost ! Ha, ha—poor De Mauprat !

DE BERINGHEN.

One throw more ?

DE MAUPRAT.

No ; I am bankrupt (*pushing gold*). There goes all—except
My honour and my sword. (*They rise.*)

DE BERINGHEN.

Long cloaks and honour
Went out of vogue together, when we found
We got on much more rapidly without them ;
The sword, indeed, is never out of fashion,—
The devil has care of *that*.

FIRST GAMESTER.

Ay, take the sword

To Cardinal Richelieu :—he gives gold for steel,
When worn by brave men.

50

DE MAUPRAT.

Richelieu !

DE BERINGHEN (*to Baradas*).

At that name

He changes colour, bites his nether lip.
Ev'n in his brightest moments whisper " Richelieu,"
And you cloud all his sunshine.

BARADAS.

I have mark'd it,

And I will learn the wherefore.

DE MAUPRAT.

The Egyptian
Dissolved her richest jewel in a draught :
Would I could so melt time and all its treasures,
And drain it thus (*drinking*).

DE BERINGHEN.

Come, gentlemen, what say ye,
A walk on the Parade?

OMNES.

Ay ; come, De Mauprat.

DE MAUPRAT.

Pardon me ; we shall meet again ere nightfall. 60

BARADAS.

I'll stay and comfort Mauprat.

DE BERINGHEN.

Comfort !—when
We gallant fellows have run out a friend
There's nothing left—except to run him through !
There's the last act of friendship.

DE MAUPRAT.

Let me keep
That favour in reserve ; in all beside
Your most obedient servant.

*Exeunt De Beringhen, &c. Manent De Mauprat and
Baradas.*

BARADAS.

You have lost—
Yet are not sad.

DE MAUPRAT.

Sad !—Life and gold have wings,
And must fly one day :—open, then, their cages
And wish them merry.

BARADAS.

You're a strange enigma :—
Fiery in war—and yet to glory lukewarm ;—
All mirth in action—in repose all gloom—
These are extremes in which the unconscious heart
Betrays the fever of deep-fix'd disease.
Confide in me ! our young days roll'd together
In the same river, glassing the same stars
That smile i' the heaven of hope ;—alike we made
Bright-winged steeds of our unform'd chimeras, 70

Spurring the fancies upward to the air,
Wherein we shaped fair castles from the cloud.
Fortune of late has sever'd us—and led
Me to the rank of Courtier, Count, and Favourite,—
You to the titles of the wildest gallant
And bravest knight in France ;—are you content ?
No ;—trust in me—some gloomy secret—

80

DE MAUPRAT.

Ay:—

A secret that doth haunt me, as, of old,
Men were possess'd of fiends !—Where'er I turn,
The grave yawns dark before me !—I *will* trust you ;—
Hating the Cardinal, and beguiled by Orleans,
You know I join'd the Languedoc revolt—
Was captured—sent to the Bastile—

BARADAS.

But shared

90

The general pardon, which the Duke of Orleans
Won for himself and all in the revolt,
Who but obey'd his orders.

DE MAUPRAT.

Note the phrase ;—

“ *Obey'd his orders.* ” Well, when on my way
To join the Duke in Languedoc, I (then
The down upon my lip—less man than boy)
Leading young valours—reckless as myself,
Seized on the town of Faviaux, and displaced
The Royal banners for the Rebel. Orleans,
(Never too daring,) when I reach'd the camp,
Blamed me for acting—mark—*without his orders* :
Upon this quibble Richelieu razed my name
Out of the general pardon.

100

BARADAS.

Yet released you

From the Bastile—

DE MAUPRAT.

To call me to his presence,
And thus address me :—“ You have seized a town
Of France, without the orders of your leader,
And for this treason, but one sentence—*DEATH.* ”

BARADAS.

Death !

DE MAUPRAT.

"I have pity on your youth and birth,
 Nor wish to glut the headsman ;—join your troop,
 Now on the march against the Spaniards ;—change 110
 The traitor's scaffold for the soldier's grave ;—
 Your memory stainless—they who shared your crime
 Exil'd or dead—your king shall never learn it."

BARADAS.

O tender pity !—O most charming prospect !
 Blown into atoms by a bomb, or drill'd
 Into a cullender by gunshot !—Well ?—

DE MAUPRAT.

You have heard if I fought bravely.—Death became
 Desired as Daphne by the eager Daygod.
 Like him I chas'd the nymph—to grasp the laurel !
 I could not die !

BARADAS.

Poor fellow !

DE MAUPRAT.

When the Cardinal 120
 Review'd the troops—his eye met mine ;—he frown'd,
 Summon'd me forth—"How's this ?" quoth he ; "you have
 shunn'd
 The sword—beware the axe !—'twill fall one day !"
 He left me thus—we were recall'd to Paris,
 And—you know all !

BARADAS.

And, knowing this, why halt you,
 Spell'd by the rattle-snake,—while in the breasts
 Of your firm friends beat hearts, that vow the death
 Of your grim tyrant ?—Wake !—Be one of us ;
 The time invites—the King detests the Cardinal,
 Dares not disgrace—but groans to be deliver'd 130
 Of that too great a subject—join your friends,
 Free France, and save yourself.

DE MAUPRAT.

Hush ! Richelieu bears
 A charmed life :—to all, who have braved his power,
 One common end—the block.

BARADAS.

Nay, if he live,
 The block your doom ;—

DE MAUPRAT.

Better the victim, Count,
 Than the assassin.—France requires a Richelieu,
 But does not need a Mauprat. Truce to this;—
 All time one midnight, where my thoughts are spectres.
 What to me fame?—What love?—

BARADAS.

Yet dost thou love *not*?

DE MAUPRAT.

Love?—I am young——

BARADAS.

And Julie fair! (*Aside*) It is so, 140
 Upon the margin of the grave—his hand
 Would pluck the rose that I would win and wear!
 (*Aloud*)* Thou lovest—

DE MAUPRAT.

Who, lonely in the midnight tent,
 Gazed on the watch-fires in the sleepless air,
 Nor chose one star amidst the clustering hosts
 To bless it in the name of some fair face
 Set in his spirit, as that star in Heaven?
 For our divine Affections, like the Spheres,
 Move ever, ever musical.

BARADAS.

You speak

As one who fed on poetry.

DE MAUPRAT.

Why, man,

150

The thoughts of lovers stir with poetry
 As leaves with summer-wind.—The heart that loves
 Dwells in an Eden, hearing angel-lutes,
 As Eve in the First Garden. Hast thou seen
 My Julie, and not felt it henceforth dull
 To live in the common world—and talk in words
 That clothe the feelings of the frigid herd?—
 Upon the perfumed pillow of her lips—
 As on his native bed of roses flush'd
 With Paphian skies—Love smiling sleeps:—Her voice 160
 The blest interpreter of thoughts as pure
 As virgin wells where Dian takes delight,
 Or Fairies dip their changelings!—In the maze
 Of her harmonious beauties—Modesty

* Omitted in representation, from line 142 to line 176.

JOSEPH.

The favourite,

Count Baradas—

RICHELIEU.

A weed of hasty growth ;
 First gentleman of the chamber—titles, lands,
 And the King's ear !—it cost me six long winters
 To mount as high, as in six little moons
 This painted lizard—But I hold the ladder, 220
 And when I shake—he falls ! What more ?

JOSEPH.

A scheme

To make your orphan-ward an instrument
 To aid your foes. You placed her with the Queen,
 One of the royal chamber,—as a watch
 I' th' enemy's quarters—

RICHELIEU.

And the silly child

Visits me daily,—calls me “ Father,”—prays
 Kind heaven to bless me—And for all the rest,
 As well have placed a doll about the Queen !
 She does not heed who frowns—who smiles ; with whom 230
 The King confers in whispers ; notes not when
 Men who last week were foes, are found in corners
 Mysteriously affectionate ; words spoken
 Within closed doors she never hears ;—by chance
 Taking the air at keyholes—Senseless puppet !
 No ears—nor eyes !—and yet she says—“ She loves me !”
 Go on—

JOSEPH.

Your ward has charm'd the King—

RICHELIEU.

Out on you !

Have I not, one by one, from such fair shoots
 Pluck'd the insidious ivy of his love ?
 And shall it creep around my blossoming tree
 Where innocent thoughts, like happy birds, make music 240
 That spirits in Heaven might hear ?—They're sinful too,
 Those passionate surfeits of the rampant flesh,
 The Church condemns them ; and to us, my Joseph,
 The props and pillars of the Church, most hurtful.

The King is weak—whoever the King loves
Must rule the King; the lady loves another,
The other rules the lady—thus we're balked
Of our own proper sway—The King must have
No goddess but the State:—the State—That's Richelieu!

JOSEPH.

This not the worst;—Louis, in all decorous, 250
And deeming you her least compliant guardian,
Would veil his suit by marriage with his minion,
Your prosperous foe, Count Baradas!

RICHELIEU.

Ha! ha!

I have another bride for Baradas.

JOSEPH.

You, my Lord?

RICHELIEU.

Ay—more faithful than the love
Of fickle woman:—when the head lies lowliest,
Clasping him fondest;—Sorrow never knew
So sure a soother,—and her bed is stainless!

JOSEPH (*aside*).

If of the grave he speaks, I do not wonder
That priests are bachelors!

Enter François.

FRANÇOIS.

Mademoiselle De Mortemar. 260

RICHELIEU.

Most opportune—admit her. [*Exit François.*]

In my closet

You'll find a rosary, Joseph; ere you tell
Three hundred beads, I'll summon you.—Stay, Joseph;—
I did omit an Ave in my matins,—
A grievous fault;—atone it for me, Joseph;
There is a scourge within; I am weak, you strong,
It were but charity to take my sin
On such broad shoulders. Exercise is healthful.

JOSEPH.

I! guilty of such criminal presumption
As to mistake myself for you—No, never! 270
Think it not!—(*Aside*) Troth, a pleasant invitation!

[*Exit Joseph.*]

Enter Julie de Mortemar.

RICHELIEU.

That's my sweet Julie!—why, upon this face
Blushes such daybreak, one might swear the Morning
Were come to visit Tithon.

JULIE (*placing herself at his feet*).

Are you gracious?—

May I say “Father?”

RICHELIEU.

Now and ever !

JULIE.

Father !

A sweet word to an orphan.

RICHELIEU.

No ; not orphan

While Richelieu lives ; thy father loved me well ;
My friend, ere I had flatterers (now, I'm great,
In other phrase, I'm friendless)—he died young
In years, not service, and bequeath'd thee to me ;
And thou shalt have a dowry, girl, to buy
Thy mate amidst the mightiest. Drooping ?—sighs ?—
Art thou not happy at the court ?

280

JULIE.

Not often.

RICHELIEU (*aside*).

Can she love Baradas ?—Ah ! at thy heart
There's what can smile and sigh, blush and grow pale,
All in a breath !—Thou art admired—art young ;
Does not his Majesty commend thy beauty—
Ask thee to sing to him ?—and swear such sounds
Had smooth'd the brows of Saul ?—

JULIE.

He's very tiresome,

Our worthy King.

RICHELIEU.

Fie ; kings are never tiresome,
Save to their ministers.—What courtly gallants
Charm ladies most ?—De Sourdiac, Longueville, or
The favourite Baradas ?

290

JULIE.

A smileless man—

I fear, and shun him.

RICHELIEU.

Yet he courts thee?

JULIE.

Then

He is more tiresome than his Majesty.

RICHELIEU.

Right, girl, shun Baradas.—Yet of these flowers
Of France, not one, in whose more honied breath
Thy heart hears Summer whisper?

Enter Huguet.

HUGUET.

The Chevalier

De Mauprat waits below.

JULIE (*starting up*).

De Mauprat!

RICHELIEU.

Hem!

He has been tiresome too!—Anon.

[*Exit Huguet.*

JULIE.

What doth he?—

300

I mean—I—Does your Eminence—that is—
Know you Messire de Mauprat?

RICHELIEU.

Well!—and you——

Has he address'd you often?

JULIE.

Often! No—

Nine times;—nay, ten;—the last time, by the lattice
Of the great staircase.—(*In a melancholy tone*) The Court
sees him rarely.

RICHELIEU.

A bold and forward royster?

JULIE.

He?—nay, modest,

Gentle, and sad methinks.

RICHELIEU.

Wears gold and azure?

JULIE.

No; sable.

RICHELIEU.

So you note his colours, Julie ?
Shame on you, child, look loftier. By the mass
I have business with this modest gentleman.

310

JULIE.

You're angry with poor Julie. There's no cause.

RICHELIEU.

No cause—you hate my foes ?

JULIE.

I do !

RICHELIEU.

Hate Mauprat ?

JULIE.

Not Mauprat. No, not Adrien, father.

RICHELIEU.

Adrien !

Familiar !—Go, child ; no,—not *that* way ;—wait
In the tapestry chamber ; I will join you,—go.

JULIE.

His brows are knit ;—I dare not call him father !
But I *must* speak—Your Eminence—

RICHELIEU (*sternly*).

Well, girl !

JULIE.

Nay

Smile on me—one smile more ; there, now I'm happy.
Do not rank Mauprat with your foes ; he is not,
I know he *is* not ; he loves France too well.

320

RICHELIEU.

Not rank De Mauprat with my foes ? So be it.
I'll blot him from that list.

JULIE.

That's my own father.

[*Exit Julie.*]

RICHELIEU (*ringing a small bell on the table.*)

Huguet !

Enter Huguet.

De Mauprat struggled not, nor murmur'd ?

HUGUET.

No; proud and passive.

RICHELIEU.

Bid him enter.—Hold :

Look that he hide no weapon. Humph, despair
 Makes victims sometimes victors. When he has enter'd,
 Glide round unseen;—place thyself yonder (*pointing to the
 screen*) ; watch him;
 If he show violence—(let me see thy carbine ;
 So, a good weapon;)—if he play the lion,
 Why—the dog's death.

HUGUET.

I never miss my mark.

330

*Exit Huguet; Richelieu seats himself at the table, and
 slowly arranges the papers before him. Enter De Mauprat,
 preceded by Huguet, who then retires behind the screen.*

RICHELIEU.

Approach, Sir.—Can you call to mind the hour,
 Now three years since, when in this room, methinks,
 Your presence honour'd me?

DE MAUPRAT.

It is, my Lord,

One of my most——

RICHELIEU (*drily*).

Delightful recollections.*

DE MAUPRAT (*aside*).

St. Denis! doth he make a jest of axe
 And headsman?

RICHELIEU (*sternly*).

I did then accord you
 A mercy ill requited—you still live?

DE MAUPRAT.

To meet death face to face at last.†

RICHELIEU.

Your words.

Are bold.

* There are many anecdotes of the irony, often so terrible, in which Richelieu indulged. But he had a love for humour in its more hearty and genial shape. He would send for Boisrobert "to make him laugh,"—and grave ministers and magnates waited in the ante-room, while the great Cardinal listened and responded to the sallies of the lively wit.

† Omitted in representation, from line 338 to line 361.

DE MAUPRAT.

My deeds have not belied them.

RICHELIEU.

Deeds !

O miserable delusion of man's pride ! 340
 Deeds ! cities sack'd, fields ravaged, hearths profaned,
 Men butcher'd ! In your hour of doom behold
 The *deeds* you boast of ! From rank showers of blood,
 And the red light of blazing roofs, you build
 The Rainbow Glory, and to shuddering Conscience
 Cry,—Lo, the Bridge to Heaven !

DE MAUPRAT.

If war be sinful,

Your hand the gauntlet cast.

RICHELIEU.

It was so, Sir.

Note the distinction :—I weigh'd well the cause
 Which made the standard holy ; raised the war
 But to secure the peace. France bled—I groan'd ; 350
 But look'd beyond ; and, in the vista, saw
 France saved, and I exulted. You—but you
 Were but the tool of slaughter—knowing nought,
 Foreseeing nought, nought hoping, nought lamenting,
 And for nought fit,—save cutting throats for hire.
 Deeds, marry, deeds !

DE MAUPRAT.

If you would deign to speak

Thus to your armies ere they march to battle,
 Perchance your Eminence might have the pain
 Of the throat-cutting to yourself.

RICHELIEU (*aside*).

He has wit,

This Mauprat—(*Aloud*)—Let it pass ; there is against you 360
 What you can less excuse. Messire de Mauprat,
 Doom'd to sure death, how hast thou since consumed
 The time allotted thee for serious thought
 And solemn penitence ?

DE MAUPRAT (*embarrassed*).

The time, my Lord ?

RICHELIEU.

Is not the question plain ? I'll answer for thee.
 Thou hast sought nor priest nor shrine ; no sackcloth chafed

Thy delicate flesh. The rosary and the death's-head
 Have not, with pious meditation, purged
 Earth from the carnal gaze. What thou hast *not* done
 Brief told; what done, a volume! Wild debauch, 370
 Turbulent riot:—for the morn the dice-box—
 Noon claim'd the duel—and the night the wassail;
 These, your most holy, pure preparatives
 For death and judgment. Do I wrong you, Sir?

DE MAUPRAT.

I was not always thus:—if changed my nature,
 Blame that, which changed my fate.—Alas, my Lord,
 There is a brotherhood which calm-eyed Reason*
 Can wot not of betwixt Despair and Mirth.
 My birth-place mid the vines of sunny Provence,
 Perchance the stream that sparkles in my veins 380
 Came from that wine of passionate life which, erst,
 Glow'd in the wild heart of the Troubadour:
 And danger, which makes steadier courage wary,
 But fevers me with an insane delight;
 As one of old who on the mountain-crag
 Caught madness from a Mænad's haunting eyes.
 Were you, my Lord,—whose path imperial power,
 And the grave cares of reverent wisdom guard
 From all that tempts to folly meaner men,—
 Were you accursed with that which you inflicted— 390
 By bed and board, dogg'd by one ghastly spectre—
 The while within you youth beat high, and life
 Grew lovelier from the neighbouring frown of death—
 The heart no bud, nor fruit—save in those seeds
 Most worthless, which spring up, bloom, bear, and wither
 In the same hour—Were this your fate, perchance,
 You would have err'd like me!

RICHELIEU.

I might, like you,
 Have been a brawler and a reveller;—not,
 Like you, a trickster and a thief.—

DE MAUPRAT (*advancing threateningly*).

Lord Cardinal!—

Unsay those words!—

(*Huguet deliberately raises the carbine*).

RICHELIEU (*waving his hand*).

Not quite so quick, friend Huguet; 400

* Omitted in representation, from line 376 to 389.

**Messire de Mauprat is a patient man,
And he can wait !—**

You have outrun your fortune ;—
 I blame you not, that you would be a beggar—
 Each to his taste !—But I do charge you, Sir,
 That, being beggar'd, you would coin false monies
 Out of that crucible, called DEBT.—To live
 On means not yours—be brave in silks and laces,
 Gallant in steeds—splendid in banquets ;—all
 Not *yours*—ungiven—unherited—unpaid for ;—
This is to be a trickster ; and to filch
 Men's art and labour, which to them is wealth, 410
 Life, daily bread,—quitting all scores with—“ Friend,
 You're troublesome ! ”—Why this, forgive me,
 Is what—when done with a less dainty grace—
 Plain folks call “ *Theft!* ”—You owe eight thousand pistoles,
 Minus one crown, two liards !—

DE MAUPRAT (*aside*).

The old conjuror!—
Sdeath, he'll inform me next how many cups
I drank at dinner!—

RICHELIEU.

**This is scandalous,
Shaming your birth and blood.—I tell you, Sir,
That you must pay your debts.—**

DE MAUPRAT.

With all my heart, 420
My Lord.—Where shall I borrow, then, the money?

RICHELIEU (*aside and laughing*).

**A humorous dare-devil!—The very man
To suit my purpose—ready, frank, and bold!**

(*Rising, and earnestly*).

Adrien de Mauprat, men have called me cruel ;—
I am not ;—I am *just* !—I found France rent asunder,—
The rich men despots, and the poor banditti ;—
Sloth in the mart, and schism within the temple ;
Brawls festering to Rebellion ; and weak Laws
Rotting away with rust in antique sheaths.—
I have re-created France ; and, from the ashes
Of the old feudal and decrepit carcase,
Civilization on her luminous wings
Soars, phoenix-like, to Jove !—What was my art ?

Genius, some say,—some, Fortune,—Witchcraft some.
 Not so;—my art was JUSTICE!—Force and Fraud
 Misname it cruelty—you shall confute them!
 My champion YOU!—You met me as your foe,
 Depart my friend—You shall not die.—France needs you.
 You shall wipe off all stains,—be rich, be honour'd,
 Be great.—

(De Mauprat falls on his knee—Richelieu raises him.)

I ask, Sir, in return, this hand, 440
 To gift it with a bride, whose dower shall match,
 Yet not exceed, her beauty.

DE MAUPRAT.

I, my Lord,—*(hesitating)*
 I have no wish to marry.

RICHELIEU.

Surely, Sir,
 To die were worse.

DE MAUPRAT.

Scarcely; the poorest coward
 Must die,—but knowingly to march to marriage—
 My Lord, it asks the courage of a lion!

RICHELIEU.

Traitor, thou triflest with me!—I know *all*!
 Thou hast dared to love my ward—my charge.

DE MAUPRAT.

As rivers
 May love the sunlight—basking in the beams,
 And hurrying on!—

RICHELIEU.

Thou hast told her of thy love? 450

DE MAUPRAT.

My Lord, if I had dared to love a maid,
 Lowliest in France, I would not so have wrong'd her,
 As bid her link rich life and virgin hope
 With one, the deathman's gripe might, from her side,
 Pluck at the nuptial altar.

RICHELIEU.

I believe thee;
 Yet since she knows not of thy love, renounce her;—
 Take life and fortune with another!—Silent?

DE MAUPRAT.

Your fate has been one triumph—You know not
 How bless'd a thing it was in my dark hour
 To nurse the one sweet thought you bid me banish. 460
 Love hath no need of words ;—nor less within
 That holiest temple—the heaven-built soul—
 Breathes the recorded vow.—Base knight,—false lover
 Were he, who barter'd all, that brighten'd grief,
 Or sanctified despair, for life and gold.
 Revoke your mercy ;—I prefer the fate
 I look'd for !

RICHELIEU.

Huguet ! to the tapestry chamber
 Conduct your prisoner.

(To Mauprat.)

You will there behold
 The executioner :—your doom be private—
 And Heaven have mercy on you !—

DE MAUPRAT.

When I'm dead, 470
 Tell her, I loved her.

RICHELIEU.

Keep such follies, Sir,
 For fitter ears ;—go—

DE MAUPRAT.

Does he mock me ?

Exeunt de Mauprat, Huguet.

RICHELIEU.

Joseph,

Come forth.

Enter Joseph.

Methinks your cheek hath lost its rubies ;
 I fear you have been too lavish of the flesh ;
 The scourge is heavy.

JOSEPH.

Pray you, change the subject.

RICHELIEU.

You good men are so modest !—Well, to business !
 Go instantly—deeds—notaries !—bid my stewards
 Arrange my house by the Luxembourg—*my house.*

No more!—a bridal present to my ward,
Who weds to-morrow.

JOSEPH.

Weds, with whom?

RICHELIEU.

De Mauprat. 480

JOSEPH.

Penniless husband!

RICHELIEU.

Bah! the mate for beauty
Should be a man, and not a money-chest!
When her brave sire lay on his bed of death,
I vow'd to be a father to his Julie:—
And so he died—the smile upon his lips!—
And when I spared the life of her young lover,
Methought I saw that smile again!—Who else,
Look you, in all the court—who else so well,
Brave, or supplant the favourite;—balk the King—
Baffle their schemes?—I have tried him:—He has honour 490
And courage;—qualities that eagle-plume
Men's souls,—and fit them for the fiercest sun,
Which ever melted the weak waxen minds
That flutter in the beams of gaudy Power!
Besides, he has taste, this Mauprat:—When my play
Was acted to dull tiers of lifeless gapers,*
Who had no soul for poetry, I saw him
Applaud in the proper places: trust me, Joseph,
He is a man of an uncommon promise!

JOSEPH.

And yet your foe.

RICHELIEU.

Have I not foes enow?— 500
Great men gain doubly when they make foes friends.

* The Abbé Arnaud tells us that the Queen was a little avenged on the Cardinal by the ill success of the tragi-comedy of *Mirame*—more than suspected to be his own—though presented to the world under the foster name of Desmarets. Its representation (says Pelisson) cost him 300,000 crowns. He was so transported out of himself by the performance, that at one time he thrust his person half out of his box to show himself to the assembly; at another time he imposed silence on the audience that they might not lose "*des endroits encore plus beaux*." He said afterwards to Desmarets: "Eh bien, les Français n'auront donc jamais de goût. Ils n'ont pas été charmés de *Mirame*!" Arnaud says pithily, "On ne pouvoit alors avoir d'autre satisfaction des offenses d'un homme qui étoit maître de tout, et redoutable à tout le monde." Nevertheless his style in prose, though not devoid of the pedantic affectations of the time, often rises into very noble eloquence.

Remember my grand maxims :—First employ
All methods to conciliate.*

JOSEPH.

Failing these ?

RICHELIEU (*fiercely*).

All means to crush : as with the opening, and
The clenching of this little hand, I will
Crush the small venom of these stinging courtiers.
So, so, we've baffled Baradas.

JOSEPH.

And when

Check the conspiracy ?

RICHELIEU.

Check, check ? Full way to it.

Let it bud, ripen, flaunt i' the day, and burst
To fruit,—the Dead Sea's fruit of ashes ; ashes 510
Which I will scatter to the winds.

Go, Joseph ;

When you return, I have a feast for you ;
The last great act of my great play : the verses,
Methinks, are fine,—ah, very fine.—*You write*
Verses !†—(*aside*) *such* verses !—You have wit, discernment.

JOSEPH (*aside*).

Worse than the scourge ! Strange that so great a statesman
Should be so bad a poet.

RICHELIEU.

What dost say ?

* " Vialart remarque une chose qui peut expliquer la conduite de Richelieu en d'autres circonstances :—c'est que les seigneurs à qui leur naissance ou leur mérite pouvoit permettre des prétensions, il avoit pour système, de leur accorder au-delà même de leurs droits et de leurs espérances, mais, aussi, une fois comblés—si, au lieu de reconnoître ses services ils se levoient contre lui, il les traitoit sans miséricorde."—*Anquetil*. See also the Political Testament, and the Mémoires de Cardinal Richelieu, in Petitot's collection.

† " Tantôt fanatique—tantôt fourbe—sonder les religieuses de Calvaire—*faire d's vers*." Thus speaks Voltaire of Father Joseph. His talents, and influence with Richelieu, grossly exaggerated in his own day, are now rightly estimated.

" C'étoit en effet un homme infatigable—portant dans les entreprises, l'activité, la souplesse, l'opiniâtreté propres à les faire réussir."—*Anquetil*. He wrote a Latin poem, called " La Turciade," in which he sought to excite the kingdoms of Christendom against the Turks. But the inspiration of Tyrtæus was denied to Father Joseph.

JOSEPH.

That it is strange so great a statesman should
Be so sublime a poet.

RICHELIEU.

Ah, you rogue ;
Laws die, Books never. Of my ministry 520
I am not vain ! but of my muse, I own it.
Come, you shall hear the verses now (*Takes up a MS.*).

JOSEPH.

My Lord,
The deeds, the notaries !

RICHELIEU.

True, I pity you ;
But business first, then pleasure. [*Exit Joseph.*]

RICHELIEU (*seats himself and reading*).

Ah, sublime !

Enter De Mauprat and Julie.

DE MAUPRAT.

Oh, speak, my Lord—I dare not think you mock me,
And yet——

RICHELIEU.

Hush—hush—This line must be consider'd !

JULIE.

Are we not both your children ?

RICHELIEU.

What a couplet !——
How now ! Oh ! Sir—you live !

DE MAUPRAT.

Why, no, methinks,
Elysium is not life !

JULIE.

He smiles !—you smile,
My father ! From my heart for ever, now, 530
I'll blot the name of orphan !

RICHELIEU.

Rise, my children,
For ye are mine—mine both ;—and in your sweet

And young delight—your love—(life's first-born glory)
My own lost youth breathes musical !

DE MAUPRAT.

I'll seek
Temple and priest henceforward ;—were it but
To learn Heaven's choicest blessings.

RICHELIEU.

Thou shalt seek
Temple and priest right soon ; the morrow's sun
Shall see across these barren thresholds pass
The fairest bride in Paris.—Go, my children ;
Even *I* loved once !——Be lovers while ye may ! 540
How is it with you, Sir ? You bear it bravely :
You know, it asks the courage of a lion.

[*Exeunt Julie and De Mauprat.*

RICHELIEU.

Oh ! godlike Power ! Woe, Rapture, Penury, Wealth,—
Marriage and Death, for one infirm old man
Through a great empire to dispense—withhold—
As the will whispers ! And shall things—like motes
That live in my daylight—lackies of court wages,
Dwarf'd starvelings—mannikins, upon whose shoulders
The burthen of a province were a load
More heavy than the globe on Atlas,—cast 550
Lots for my robes and sceptre ? France ! I love thee !
All Earth shall never pluck thee from my heart !
My mistress France—my wedded wife,—sweet France,
Who shall proclaim divorce for thee and me !

[*Exit Richelieu.*

ACT II.

Second Day.

SCENE I.

A splendid Apartment in Mauprat's new House. Casements opening to the Gardens, beyond which the domes of the Luxembourg Palace.

Enter Baradas.

BARADAS.

Mauprat's new home :—too splendid for a soldier !
 But o'er his floors—the while I stalk—methinks
 My shadow spreads gigantic to the gloom
 The old rude towers of the Bastile cast far
 Along the smoothness of the jocund day.—
 Well, thou hast scaped the fierce caprice of Richelieu ;
 But art thou farther from the headsman, fool ?
 Thy secret I have whisper'd to the King ;—
 Thy marriage makes the King thy foe.—Thou stand'st
 On the abyss—and in the pool below
 I see a ghastly, headless phantom mirror'd ;—
 Thy likeness ere the marriage moon hath waned.
 Meanwhile—meanwhile—ha—ha, if thou art wedded,
 Thou art not wived.

10

Enter Mauprat (splendidly dressed).

MAUPRAT.

Was ever fate like mine ?
 So blest, and yet so wretched !

BARADAS.

Joy, de Mauprat !—
 Why, what a brow, man, for your wedding-day !

DE MAUPRAT.

Jest not !—Distraction !

BARADAS.

What your wife, a shrew
 Already ? Courage, man—the common lot !

And young delight—your love—(life's first-born glory)
My own lost youth breathes musical !

DE MAUPRAT.

I'll seek
Temple and priest henceforward ;—were it but
To learn Heaven's choicest blessings.

RICHELIEU.

Thou shalt seek
Temple and priest right soon ; the morrow's sun
Shall see across these barren thresholds pass
The fairest bride in Paris.—Go, my children ;
Even *I* loved once !——Be lovers while ye may ! 540
How is it with you, Sir ? You bear it bravely :
You know, it asks the courage of a lion.

[*Exeunt Julie and De Mauprat.*]

RICHELIEU.

Oh ! godlike Power ! Woe, Rapture, Penury, Wealth,—
Marriage and Death, for one infirm old man
Through a great empire to dispense—withhold—
As the will whispers ! And shall things—like motes
That live in my daylight—lackies of court wages,
Dwarf'd starvelings—mannikins, upon whose shoulders
The burthen of a province were a load
More heavy than the globe on Atlas,—cast 550
Lots for my robes and sceptre ? France ! I love thee !
All Earth shall never pluck thee from my heart !
My mistress France—my wedded wife,—sweet France,
Who shall proclaim divorce for thee and me !

[*Exit Richelieu.*]

ACT II.

Second Day.

SCENE I.

A splendid Apartment in Mauprat's new House. Casements opening to the Gardens, beyond which the domes of the Luxembourg Palace.

Enter Baradas.

BARADAS.

Mauprat's new home :—too splendid for a soldier !
But o'er his floors—the while I stalk—methinks
My shadow spreads gigantic to the gloom
The old rude towers of the Bastile cast far
Along the smoothness of the jocund day.—
Well, thou hast scaped the fierce caprice of Richelieu ;
But art thou farther from the headsman, fool ?
Thy secret I have whisper'd to the King ;—
Thy marriage makes the King thy foe.—Thou stand'st
On the abyss—and in the pool below
I see a ghastly, headless phantom mirror'd ;—
Thy likeness ere the marriage moon hath waned.
Meanwhile—meanwhile—ha—ha, if thou art wedded,
Thou art not wived.

10

Enter Mauprat (splendidly dressed).

MAUPRAT.

Was ever fate like mine ?
So blest, and yet so wretched !

BARADAS.

Joy, de Mauprat !—
Why, what a brow, man, for your wedding-day !

DE MAUPRAT.

Jest not !—Distraction !

BARADAS.

What your wife, a shrew
Already ? Courage, man—the common lot !

cautioned for his own sake to preserve silence as to our injunction, more especially to Mademoiselle de Mortemar.

“ Given under our hand and seal at the Louvre.

“ LOUIS.”

BARADAS (*returning the letter*).

Amazement !—Did not Richelieu say, the King
Knew not your crime ?

DE MAUPRAT.

He said so.

BARADAS.

Poor de Mauprat !—

See you the snare, the vengeance worse than death, 30
Of which you are the victim ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Ha !

BARADAS (*aside*).

It works !

(*Julie and De Beringhen in the Gardens.*)

You have not sought the Cardinal yet to——

DE MAUPRAT.

No !

Scarce yet my sense awaken'd from the shock ;
Now I will seek him.

BARADAS.

Hold, beware !—Stir not

Till we confer again.

DE MAUPRAT.

Speak out, man !—

BARADAS.

Hush !

Your wife !—De Beringhen !—Be on your guard—
Obey the royal orders to the letter.
I'll look around your palace. By my troth
A princely mansion !

DE MAUPRAT.

Stay—

BARADAS.

So new a bridegroom

Can want no visitors ;—Your servant, Madam ! 40
Oh ! happy pair—Oh, charming picture !

[Exit through a side-door.]

JULIE :

Adrien,

You left us suddenly—Are you not well ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Oh, very well—that is—extremely ill !

JULIE.

Ill, Adrien ? *(taking his hand).*

DE MAUPRAT.

Not when I see thee.

(He is about to lift her hand to his lips when De Beringhen coughs and pulls his mantle. Mauprat drops the hand and walks away.)

JULIE.

Alas !

Should he not love me ?

DE BERINGHEN *(aside)*.

Have a care, I must

Report each word—each gesture to his Majesty.

DE MAUPRAT.

Sir, if you were not in his Majesty's service,
You'd be the most officious, impudent,
Damn'd busy-body ever interfering
In a man's family affairs.

DE BERINGHEN.

But as

50

I do belong, Sir, to his Majesty—

DE MAUPRAT.

You're lucky !—Still, were we a story higher,
'Twere prudent not to go too near the window.

JULIE.

Adrien, what have I done ? Say, am I changed
Since yesterday ?—or was it but for wealth,
Ambition, life—that—that—you swore you loved me ?

DE MAUPRAT.

I shall go mad !—I do, indeed I do—

DR BERINGHEN (*aside*).

Not love her ! that were highly disrespectful.

JULIE.

You do—what, Adrien ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Oh ! I do, indeed——

I do think, that this weather is delightful ! 60

A charming day ! the sky is so serene !

And what a prospect !—(*to De Beringhen*) Oh ! you Popinjay !

JULIE.

He jests at me !—he mocks me !—yet I love him,

And every look becomes the lips we love !

Perhaps I am too grave ?—You laugh at Julie ;

If laughter please you, welcome be the music !

Only say, Adrien, that you love me.

DE MAUPRAT (*kissing her hand*).

Ay ;

With my whole heart I love you !——

Now, Sir, go,

And tell that to his Majesty !—Who ever

Heard of its being a state-offence to kiss

The hand of one's own wife ? 70

JULIE.

He says he loves me,

And starts away, as if to say “ I love you ”

Meant something *very* dreadful.—Come, sit by me,—

I place your chair !—*fit* on your gallantry !

(*They sit down ; as he pushes his chair back, she draws hers nearer.*)

JULIE.

Why must this strange Messire de Beringhen

Be always here ? He never takes a hint.

Do you not wish him gone ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Upon my soul

I do, my Julie !—Send him for your *bouquet*,

Your glove, your—anything—

JULIE.

Messire De Beringhen,

I dropp'd my glove in the gardens by the fountain, 80
 Or the alcove, or—stay—no, by the statue
 Of Cupid ; may I ask you to——

DE BERINGHEN.

To send for it ?

Certainly (*ringing a bell on the table*). Andrè, Pierre (your
 rascals, how
 Do ye call them ?)

Enter Servants.

Ah—*Madame* has dropp'd her glove
 In the gardens, by the fountain,—or the alcove ;
 Or—stay—no, by the statue—eh ?—of Cupid.
 Bring it.

DE MAUPRAT.

Did ever now one pair of shoulders
 Carry such waggon-loads of impudence
 Into a gentleman's drawing-room ?

Dear Julie,

I'm busy—letters—visitors—the devil ! 90
 I do beseech you leave me—I say—leave me.

JULIE (*weeping*).

You are unkind.

*Exit. (As she goes out, Mauprat drops on one knee and
 kisses the hem of her mantle, unseen by her.)*

DE BERINGHEN.

Ten million of apologies——

DE MAUPRAT.

I'll not take one of them. I have, as yet,
 Withstood all things—my heart—my love—my rights.
 But Julie's tears !——When is this farce to end ?

DE BERINGHEN.

Oh ! when you please. His Majesty requests me,
 As soon as you infringe his gracious orders,
 To introduce you to the Governor
 Of the Bastile. I should have had that honour 100
 Before, but, gad, my foible is good nature ;
 One can't be hard upon a friend's infirmities.

DE MAUPRAT.

I know the King can send me to the scaffold—

Dark prospect!—but I'm used to it; and if
The Church and Council, by this hour to-morrow,
One way or other settle not the matter,
I will——

DE BERINGHEN.

What, my dear Sir?

DE MAUPRAT.

Show you the door,
My dear, dear Sir; talk as I please, with whom
I please, in my own house, dear Sir, until
His Majesty shall condescend to find
A stouter gentleman than you, dear Sir, 110
To take me out; and now you understand me,
My dear, most dear—Oh, damnably dear Sir!

DE BERINGHEN.

What, almost in a passion! you will cool
Upon reflection. Well, since *Madame's* absent,
I'll take a small refreshment. Now, don't stir;
Be careful;—how's your burgundy?—I'll taste it—
Finish it all before I leave you. Nay,
No form;—you see I make myself at home.

[*Exit De Beringhen.*]

DE MAUPRAT (*going to the door through which Baradas had
passed*).

Baradas! Count!

Enter Baradas.

You spoke of snares—of vengeance
Sharper than death—be plainer.

BARADAS.

What so clear?

120

Richelieu has but two passions——

DE MAUPRAT.

Richelieu!

BARADAS.

Yes!

Ambition and revenge—in you both blended.
First for ambition—Julie is his ward,
Innocent—docile—pliant to his will—
He placed her at the court—foresaw the rest—
The King loves Julie!

DE MAUPRAT.

Merciful Heaven! The King!

BARADAS.

Such Cupids lend new plumes to Richelieu's wings :
 But the court etiquette must give such Cupids
 The veil of Hymen—(Hymen but in name).
 He look'd abroad—found you his foe :—*thus* served 130
 Ambition—by the grandeur of his ward,
 And vengeance—by dishonour to his foe !

DE MAUPRAT.

Prove this.

BARADAS.

You have the proof—the royal Letter :—
 Your strange exemption from the general pardon,
 Known but to me and Richelieu ; can you doubt
 Your friend to acquit your foe ? The truth is glaring—
 Richelieu alone could tell the princely Lover
 The tale which sells your life,—or buys your honour !

DE MAUPRAT.

I see it all !—Mock pardon—hurried nuptials—
 False bounty !—all !—the serpent of that smile ! 140
 Oh ! it stings home !

BARADAS.

You yet shall crush his malice ;
 Our plans are sure :—Orleans is at our head ;
 We meet to night ; join us, and with us triumph.

DE MAUPRAT.

To night ?—Oh Heaven !—my marriage night !—Revenge !

BARADAS.

What class of men, whose white lips do not curse*
 The grim, insatiate, universal tyrant ?
 We, noble-born—where are our antique rights—
 Our feudal seignories—our castled strength,
 That did divide us from the base Plebeians,
 And made our swords our law—where are they ?—trod 150
 To dust—and o'er the graves of our dead power
 Scaffolds are monuments—the Kingly House
 Shorn of its beams—the Royal Sun of France
 'Clips'd by this blood-red comet. Where we turn,
 Nothing but Richelieu !—Armies—Church—State—Laws,
 But mirrors that do multiply his beams.

* Omitted in representation from line 146 to 171.

He sees all—acts all—Argus and Briaræus—
 Spy at our boards—and deathsman at our hearths,
 Under the venom of one laidley nightshade,
 Wither the lilies of all France.

DE MAUPRAT (*impatiently*).

But Julie—

160

BARADAS (*unheeding him*).

As yet the Fiend that serves hath saved his power
 From every snare ; and in the epitaphs
 Of many victims dwells a warning moral
 That preaches caution. Were I not assured
 That what before was hope is ripen'd now
 Into most certain safety, trust me, Mauprat,
 I still could hush my hate and mark thy wrongs,
 And say " Be patient !"—*Now*, the King himself
 Smiles kindly when I tell him that his peers
 Will rid him of his Priest. You knit your brows,
 Noble impatience !—Pass we to our scheme !
 'Tis Richelieu's wont, each morn, within his chapel,
 (Hypocrite worship ended,) to dispense
 Alms to the Mendicant friars,—in that guise
 A band (yourself the leader) shall surround
 And seize the despot.

170

DE MAUPRAT.

But the King ? but Julie ?

BARADAS.

The King, infirm in health, in mind more feeble,
 Is but the plaything of a Minister's will.
 Were Richelieu dead—his power were mine ; and Louis
 Soon should forget his passion and your crime. 180
 But whither now ?

DE MAUPRAT.

I know not ; I scarce hear thee ;
 A little while for thought : anon I'll join thee ;
 But now, all air seems tainted, and I loathe
 The face of man !

[*Exit De Mauprat through the Gardens.*]

BARADAS.

Start from the chase, my prey,
 But as thou speed'st the hell-hounds of Revenge
 Pant in thy track and dog thee down.

Enter De Beringhen, his mouth full, a napkin in his hand.

DE BERINGHEN.

Chevalier,
Your cook's a miracle,—what, my Host gone ?
Faith, Count, my office is a post of danger—
A fiery fellow, Mauprat !—touch and go,—
Match and saltpetre,—pr—r—r—r— !

BARADAS.

You
Will be released ere long. The King resolves
To call the bride to court this day.

190

DE BERINGHEN.

Poor Mauprat !
Yet, since *you* love the lady, why so careless
Of the King's suit ?

BARADAS.

Because the lady's virtuous,
And the King timid. Ere he win the suit
He'll lose the crown,—the bride will be a widow,—
And I—the Richelieu of the Regent Orleans.

DE BERINGHEN.

Is Louis still so chafed against the Fox,
For snatching yon fair dainty from the Lion ?

BARADAS.

So chafed, that Richelieu totters. Yes, the King
Is half conspirator against the Cardinal.
Enough of this. I've found the man we wanted,—
The man to head the hands that murder Richelieu,—
The man, whose name the synonym for daring.

200

DE BERINGHEN.

He must mean me !—No, Count, I am—I own
A valiant dog—but still—

BARADAS.

Whom can I mean
But Mauprat ?—Mark, to-night we meet at Marion's,
There shall we sign :—thence send this scroll (*showing it*) to
Bouillon.
You're in that secret (*affectionately*)—one of our new Council.

DE BERINGHEN.

But to admit the Spaniard—France's foe—

210

Into the heart of France,—dethrone the King,—
It looks like treason, and I smell the headsman.

BARADAS.

Oh, Sir, too late to falter : when we meet
We must arrange the separate—coarser scheme,
For Richelieu's death. Of this despatch De Mauprat
Must nothing learn. He only bites at vengeance,
And he would start from treason.—We must post him
Without the door at Marion's—as a sentry.
(*Aside*)—So, when his head is on the block—his tongue
Cannot betray our more august designs! 220

DE BERINGHEN.

I'll meet you, if the King can spare me.—(*Aside*).—No!
I am too old a goose to play with foxes,
I'll roost at home. Meanwhile, in the next room
There's a delicious pâté, let's discuss it.

BARADAS.

Pshaw! a man fill'd with a sublime ambition
Has no time to discuss your pâtés.

DE BERINGHEN.

Pshaw!

And a man fill'd with as sublime a pâté
Has no time to discuss ambition.—Gad,
I have the best of it!

(*Enter Julie hastily with first Courtier.*)

JULIE (*to Courtier*).

A summons, Sir,
To attend the Louvre?—On *this* day, too?

COURTIER.

Madame, 230
The royal carriage waits below.—Messire (*to De Beringhen*),
You will return with us.

JULIE.

What can this mean?—
Where is my husband?

BARADAS.

He has left the house
Perhaps till nightfall—so he bade me tell you.
Alas, were I the lord of such fair treasure—

JULIE (*impatiently*).

Till nightfall?—Strange—my heart misgives me !

COURTIER.

Madame,

My orders will not brook delay.

JULIE (*to Baradas*).

You'll see him—

And you will tell him !

BARADAS.

From the flowers of Hybla
Never more gladly did the bee bear honey,
Than I take sweetness from those rosiest lips, 240
Though to the hive of others !

COURTIER (*to De Beringhen*).

Come, Messire.

DE BERINGHEN (*hesitating*).

One moment, just to—

COURTIER.

Come, Sir.

DE BERINGHEN.

I shall not
Discuss the pâté after all. 'Ecod,
I'm puzzled now. I don't know who's the best of it !

Exeunt Julie, De Beringhen, and Courtier.

BARADAS.

Now will this fire his fever into madness !
All is made clear : Mauprat *must* murder Richelieu—
Die for that crime :—I shall console his Julie—
This will reach Bouillon !—from the wrecks of France
I shall carve out—who knows—perchance a throne !
All in despite of my Lord Cardinal.— 250

Enter De Mauprat from the Gardens.

DE MAUPRAT.

Speak ! can it be ?—Methought, that from the terrace
I saw the carriage of the King—and Julie !
No !—no !—my frenzy peoples the void air
With its own phantoms !

BARADAS.

Nay, too true.—Alas !
Was ever lightning swifter, or more blasting,
Than Richelieu's forkèd guile ?

DE MAUPRAT.

I'll to the Louvre——

BARADAS.

And lose all hope !—The Louvre !—the sure gate
To the Bastile !

DE MAUPRAT.

The King——

BARADAS.

Is but the wax,
Which Richelieu stamps ! Break the malignant *seal*,
And I will rase the print ! Come, man, take heart ! 260
Her virtue well could brave a sterner trial
Than a few hours of cold imperious courtship.
Were Richelieu *dust*—no danger !

DE MAUPRAT.

Ghastly Vengeance !
To thee and thine august and solemn sister
The unrelenting Death ! I dedicate
The blood of Armand Richelieu ! When Dishonour
Reaches our hearths Law dies, and Murthler takes
The angel shape of Justice !

BARADAS.

Bravely said !
At midnight,—Marion's !—Nay, I cannot leave thee
To thoughts that——

DE MAUPRAT.

Speak not to me !—I am yours !— 270
But speak not ! There's a voice within my soul,
Whose cry could drown the thunder.—Oh ! if men
Will play dark sorcery with the heart of man,
Let they, who raise the spell, beware the Fiend ! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A room in the Palais Cardinal (as in the First Act).

Richelieu.—Joseph.

François. writing at a table.

JOSEPH.

Yes ;—Huguet, taking his accustom'd round,—
Disguised as some plain burgher,—heard these rufflers
Quoting your name :—he listen'd,—“ Pshaw !” said one,
“ We are to seize the Cardinal in his palace
To-morrow !”—“ How ?” the other ask'd ;—“ You'll hear
The whole design to-night ; the Duke of Orleans 280
And Baradas have got the map of action
At their fingers' end.”—“ So be it,” quoth the other,
“ I will be there,—Marion de Lorme's—at midnight !”

RICHELIEU.

I have them, man, I have them !

JOSEPH.

So they say
Of you, my Lord ;—believe me, that their plans
Are mightier than you deem. You must employ
Means no less vast to meet them !

RICHELIEU.

Bah ! in policy
We foil gigantic danger, not by giants,
But dwarfs.—The statues of our stately fortune
Are sculptured by the chisel—not the axe !* 290
Ah ! were I younger—by the knightly heart
That beats beneath these priestly robes,† I would

* Richelieu not only employed the lowest, but would often consult men commonly esteemed, the dullest. “ Il disoit que dans des choses de très grande importance, il avait expérimenté, que les moins sages donnoient souvent les meilleurs expédiens.”—*Le Clerc*.

† Both Richelieu and Joseph were originally intended for the profession of arms. Joseph had served before he obeyed the spiritual inspiration to become a Capuchin. The death of his brother opened to Richelieu the Bishopric of Luçon ; but his military propensities were as strong as his priestly ambition. I need scarcely add that the Cardinal, during his brilliant campaign in Italy, marched at the head of his troops in complete armour. It was under his administration that occurs the last example of proclaiming war by the chivalric defiance of herald and cartel. Richelieu valued himself much on his personal activity, for his vanity was as universal as his ambition. A nobleman of the

Have pastime with these cut-throats!—Yea,—as when,
 Lured to the ambush of the expecting foe,—
 I clove my pathway through the plumed sea!
 Reach me yon falchion, François,—not that bauble
 For carpet-warriors,—yonder—such a blade
 As old Charles Martel might have wielded when
 He drove the Saracen from France.

*(François brings him one of the long two-handed swords worn
 in the Middle Ages.)*

With this

I, at Rochelle, did hand to hand engage 300
 The stalwart Englisher,—no mongrels, boy,
 Those island mastiffs,—mark the notch—a deep one—
 His casque made here,—I shore him to the waist!
 A toy—a feather—then!

(Tries to wield, and lets it fall.)

You see a child could

Slay Richelieu, now.

FRANÇOIS *(his hand on his hilt).*

But now, at your command
 Are other weapons, my good Lord.

RICHELIEU *(who has seated himself as to write, lifts the pen).*

True,—THIS!

Beneath the rule of men entirely great
 The pen is mightier than the sword. Behold
 The arch-enchanter's wand!—itself a nothing!—
 But taking sorcery from the master-hand 310
 To paralyse the Cæsars—and to strike
 The loud earth breathless!—Take away the sword—
 States can be saved without it! ¶

(Looking on the clock.)

'Tis the hour,—

Retire, Sir.

[Exit François.]

*(A knock is heard. A door, concealed in the arras opens
 cautiously. Enter Marion de Lorme.)*

house of Grammont one day found him employed in *jumping*, and, with all the *savoir vivre* of a Frenchman and a courtier, offered to jump against him. He suffered the Cardinal to jump higher, and soon after found himself rewarded by an appointment. Yet, strangely enough, this vanity did not lead to a patronage injurious to the state; for never before in France was ability made so essential a requisite in promotion. He was lucky in finding the cleverest fellows among his adroitest flatterers.

JOSEPH (*amazed*).

Marion de Lorme !

RICHELIEU.

Hist !—Joseph,

Keep guard.

(*Joseph retires to the principal entrance.*)

My faithful Marion !

MARION.

Good, my Lord,
They meet to-night in my poor house. The Duke
Of Orleans heads them.

RICHELIEU.

Yes—go on.

MARION.

His Highness
Much question'd if I knew some brave, discreet,
And vigilant man, whose tongue could keep a secret,
And who had those twin qualities for service, 320
The love of gold, the hate of Richelieu.—

RICHELIEU.

You ?—

MARION.

Made answer, “ Yes—my brother ;—bold and trusty ;
Whose faith, my faith could pledge ; ” —the Duke then
bade me
Have him equipp'd and arm'd—well-mounted—ready
This night to part for Italy.

RICHELIEU.

Aha !—

Has Bouillon too turn'd traitor !—So, methought !—
What part of Italy ?

MARION.

The Piedmont frontier,
Where Bouillon lies encamp'd.

RICHELIEU.

Now there is danger !
Great danger !—If he tamper with the Spaniard,
And Louis list not to my council, as, 330
Without sure proof, he will not,—France is lost.
What more ?

MARION.

Dark hints of some design to seize
Your person in your palace. Nothing clear—
His Highness trembled while he spoke—the words
Did choke each other !

RICHELIEU.

So !—Who is the brother
You recommended to the Duke ?

MARION.

Whoever
Your Eminence may father !—

RICHELIEU.

Darling Marion ! *

(Goes to the table, and returns with a large bag of gold.)

There—pshaw—a trifle !—What an eye you have !
And what a smile—child !—*(kisses her)*—Ah ! you fair per-
dition—
'Tis well I'm old !

MARION *(aside and seriously)*.

What a great man he is ! 340

RICHELIEU.

You are sure they meet ?—the hour ?

* Voltaire openly charges Richelieu with being the lover of Marion de Lorme, whom the great poet of France, Victor Hugo, has sacrificed History to adorn with qualities which were certainly not added to her personal charms.—She was not less perfidious than beautiful.—Le Clerc, properly, refutes the accusation of Voltaire, against the discretion of Richelieu ; and says, very justly, that if the great minister had the frailties of human nature, he learnt how to veil them,—at least when he obtained the scarlet. In earlier life he had been prone to galantries which a little prepossessed the King (who was formal and decorous, and threw a singular coldness into the few attachments he permitted to himself) against the aspiring intriguer. But these gayer occupations died away in the engagement of higher pursuits or of darker passions.

MARION.

At midnight.

RICHELIEU.

And

You will engage to give the Duke's despatch
To whom I send ?

MARION.

Aye, marry !

RICHELIEU (*aside*).

Huguet ? No ;
He will be wanted elsewhere.—Joseph ?—zealous, 70
But too well known—too much the *elder* brother !
Mauprat—alas—it is his wedding-day !—
François ?—the Man of Men !—unnoted—young—
Ambitious—(*goes to the door*)—François !

Enter François.

RICHELIEU.

Follow this fair lady :
(Find him the suiting garments, Marion,) take 350
My fleetest steed :—arm thyself to the teeth ;
A packet will be given you—with orders,
No matter what !—The instant that your hand
Closes upon it—clutch *it*, like your honour,
Which Death alone can steal, or ravish—set 80
Spurs to your steed—be breathless, till you stand
Again before me.—Stay, Sir !—You will find me
Two short leagues hence—at Ruelle, in my castle.
Young man, be blithe !—for—note me—from the hour
I grasp that packet—think your guardian Star 360
Rains fortune on you !

FRANÇOIS.

If I fail—

RICHELIEU.

Fail—fail ?

In the lexicon of youth, which Fate reserves
For a bright manhood, there is no such word

As—*fail*!—(You will instruct him further, Marion)
Follow her—but at distance ;—speak not to her,
Till you are housed ;—Farewell, boy ! Never say
“ *Fail* ” again.

90

FRANÇOIS.

I will not !

RICHELIEU (*patting his locks*).

There's my young hero !—

[*Exeunt François—Marion.*

RICHELIEU.

So, they would seize my person in this palace ?—
I cannot guess their scheme :—but my retinue
Is here too large !—a single traitor could
Strike impotent the faith of thousands ;—Joseph,
Art sure of Huguet ?—Think—we hang'd his Father !

370

JOSEPH.

But you have bought the Son ;—heap'd favours on him !

RICHELIEU.

Trash !—favours past—that's nothing.—In his hours
Of confidence with you, has he named the favours
To *come*—he counts on ?

JOSEPH.

Yes :—a Colonel's rank,
And Letters of Nobility.

RICHELIEU.

What, Huguet !—

(*Here Huguet enters, as to address the Cardinal, who does
not perceive him.*)

HUGUET.

My own name, soft—(*glides behind the screen* !)

RICHELIEU.

Colonel and Nobleman !

My bashful Huguet—that can never be !—
We have him not the less—we'll *promise it* !

380

And see the King withholds!—Ah, kings are oft
 A great convenience to a minister!
 No wrong to Huguet either!—Moralists
 Say, Hope is sweeter than Possession!—Yes—
 We'll count on Huguet! Favours *past* do gorge
 Our dogs; leave service drowsy—dull the scent,
 Slacken the speed;—favours *to come*, my Joseph,
 Produce a lusty, hungry gratitude,
 A ravenous zeal, that of the commonest cur
 Would make a Cerberus.—You are right, this treason 390
 Assumes a fearful aspect:—but once crush'd,
 Its very ashes shall manure the soil
 Of power; and ripen such full sheaves of greatness,
 That all the summer of my fate shall seem
 Fruitless beside the autumn!

(Huguet holds up his hand menacingly, and creeps out.)

JOSEPH.

The saints grant it!

RICHELIEU (*solemnly*).

Yes—for sweet France, Heaven grant it!—O my country,
 For thee—thee only—though men deem it not—
 Are toil and terror my familiars!—I
 Have made thee great and fair—upon thy brows
 Wreath'd the old Roman laurel:—at thy feet 400
 Bow'd nations down.—No pulse in my ambition
 Whose beatings were not measured from thy heart!
 In the old times before us, patriots lived*
 And died for liberty—

JOSEPH.

As you would live
 And die for despotry—

RICHELIEU.

False monk, not so,
 But for the purple and the power wherein
 State clothes herself.—I love my native land
 Not as Venetian, Englisher, or Swiss,
 But as a Noble and a Priest of France;
 “All things for France”—lo, my eternal maxim! 410
 The vital axle of the restless wheels
 That bear me on! With her, I have entwined

* Omitted, in representation, from 1. 402 to 419.

My passions and my fate—my crimes, my virtues—
 Hated and loved *, and schemed, and shed men's blood,
 As the calm crafts of Tuscan Sages teach
 Those who would make their country great. Beyond
 The Map of France—my heart can travel not,
 But fills that limit to its farthest verge ;
 And while I live—Richelieu and France are one.
 We Priests, to whom the Church forbids in youth 420
 The plighted one—to manhood's toil denies
 The soother helpmate—from our wither'd age
 Shuts the sweet blossoms of the second spring
 That smiles in the name of Father—We are yet
 Not holier than Humanity, and must
 Fulfil Humanity's condition—Love !
 Debarr'd the Actual, we but breathe a life
 To the chill Marble of the Ideal—Thus,
 In thy unseen and abstract Majesty,

* Richelieu did in fact so thoroughly associate himself with the State, that, in cases where the extreme penalty of the law had been incurred, Le Clerc justly observes that he was more inexorable to those he had favoured—even to his own connections—than to other and more indifferent offenders. It must be remembered as some excuse for his unrelenting sternness that, before his time, the great had been accustomed to commit any disorder with impunity—even the crime of treason, “auparavant on ne faisoit poser les armes aux rebelles qu'en leur accordant quelque récompense.” On entering into the administration, he therefore laid it down as a maxim necessary to the existence of the State, that “no crime should be committed with impunity.” To carry out this maxim, the long-established licence to crime made even justice seem cruel. But the victims most commiserated from their birth or accomplishments, as Montmorenci, or Cinq Mars, were traitors in actual conspiracy against their country, and would have forfeited life in any land where the punishment of death existed, and the lawgiver was strong enough to vindicate the law. Richelieu was in fact a patriot unsoftened by philanthropy. As in Venice (where the favourite aphorism was, Venice first,* Christianity next), so, with Richelieu, the primary consideration was, “what will be best for the Country?” He had no abstract principle, whether as a politician or a priest, when applied to the world that lay beyond the boundaries of France. Thus he, whose object was to found in France a splendid and imperious despotism—assisted the Parliamentary party in England, and signed a treaty of alliance and subsidies with the Catalan rebels for the establishment of a Republic in Barcelona ;—to convulse other Monarchies was to consolidate the growing Monarchy of France.—So he, who completely crushed the Protestant party at home, braved all the wrath of the Vatican, and even the resentment of the King, in giving the most essential aid to the Protestants abroad. There was, indeed, a largeness of view in his hostility to the French Huguenots, which must be carefully distinguished from the intolerance of the mere priest. He opposed them, not as a Catholic, but as a Statesman. The Huguenots were strong republicans, and had formed plans for dividing France into provincial commonwealths ; and the existence of Rochelle was absolutely incompatible with the integrity of the French Monarchy. It was a second capital held by the Huguenots, claiming independent authority, and the right to treat with Foreign Powers. Richelieu's final conquest was marked by a humanity, that had nothing of the bigot. The Huguenots obtained a complete amnesty, and had only to regret the loss of privileges and fortifications which could not have existed with any security to the rest of France.

* Pria Veneziana, poi Christiane.”

My France—my Country, I have bodied forth
A thing to love. What are these robes of state,
This pomp, this palace ? perishable baubles !
In this world two things only are immortal—
Fame and a People !

430

Enter Huguet.

HUGUET.

My Lord Cardinal,
Your Eminence bade me seek you at this hour.

RICHELIEU.

Did I ?—True, Huguet.—So—you overheard
Strange talk amongst these gallants ? Snares and traps
For Richelieu ?—Well—we'll balk them ; let me think—
The men at arms you head—how many ?

HUGUET.

Twenty,*

My Lord.

RICHELIEU.

All trusty ?

HUGUET.

Yes, for ordinary
Occasions—if for great ones, I would change
Three-fourths at least.

440

RICHELIEU.

Ay, what are great occasions ?

HUGUET.

Great bribes !

RICHELIEU (*to Joseph*).

Good lack, he knows some paragons
Superior to great bribes !

HUGUET.

True Gentlemen
Who have transgress'd the Laws—and value life
And lack not gold ; your Eminence alone
Can grant them pardon. *Ergo* you can trust them !

* The guard attached to Richelieu's person was, in the first instance, fifty arquebussiers, afterwards increased to two companies of cavalry and two hundred musqueteers. Huguet is, therefore, to be considered merely as the lieutenant of a small detachment of this little army. In point of fact, the subdivisions of the guard took it in turns to serve.

RICHELIEU.

Logic !—So be it—let this *honest* twenty
Be arm'd and mounted—(*aside.*) So they meet at midnight,
The attempt on me to-morrow—Ho ! we'll strike 450
'Twixt wind and water.—(*Aloud.*) Does it need much time
To find these ornaments to Human Nature?

HUGUET.

My Lord—the trustiest of them are not birds
That love the daylight.—I do know a haunt
Where they meet nightly —

RICHELIEU.

Ere the dawn be grey,
All could be arm'd, assembled, and at Ruelle
In my old hall?

HUGUET.

By one hour after midnight.

RICHELIEU.

The castle's strong. You know its outlets, Huguet ?
Would twenty men, well posted, keep such guard 460
That not one step—(and Murther's step is stealthy)—
Could glide within—unseen?

HUGUET.

A triple wall—
A drawbridge and portcullis—twenty men
Under my lead, a month might hold that castle
Against a host.

RICHELIEU.

They do not strike till morning,
Yet I will shift the quarter—Bid the grooms
Prepare the litter—I will hence to Ruelle
While daylight last—and one hour after midnight
You and your twenty saints shall seek me thither!
You're made to rise !—You are, Sir ;—eyes of lynx,
Ears of the stag, a footfall like the snow ; 470

You are a valiant fellow ;—yea, a trusty,
 Religious, exemplary, incorrupt,
 And precious jewel of a fellow, Huguet !
 If I live long enough,—ay, mark my words—
 If I live long enough, you'll be a Colonel—
 Noble perhaps !—One hour, Sir, after midnight.

HUGUET.

You leave me dumb with gratitude, my Lord ;
 I'll pick the trustiest (*aside*) Marion's house can furnish !
[Exit Huguet.]

RICHELIEU.

How like a spider shall I sit in my hole,
 And watch the meshes tremble.

JOSEPH.

But, my Lord, 480

Were it not wiser still to man the palace,
 And seize the traitors in the act ?

RICHELIEU.

No ; Louis,

Long chafed against me—Julie stolen from him,
 Will rouse him more.—He'll say I hatch'd the treason,
 Or scout my charge :—He half desires my death ;
 But the despatch to Bouillon, some dark scheme
 Against *his* crown—*there* is our weapon, Joseph !
 With that all safe—without it, all is peril !
 Meanwhile to my old castle ; *you* to court,
 Diving with careless eyes into men's hearts, 490
 As ghostly churchmen should do ! See the King,
 Bid him peruse that sage and holy treatise,
 Wherein 'tis set forth how a Premier should
 Be chosen from the Priesthood—how the King
 Should never listen to a single charge
 Against his servant, nor conceal one whisper
 That the rank envies of a court distil
 Into his ear—to fester the fair name
 Of my—I mean his Minister !—Oh ! Joseph,

A most convincing treatise.*

GOOD—all favours,
If François be but bold, and Huguet honest.—
Huguet—I half suspect—he bow'd too low—
'Tis not his way.

500

JOSEPH.

This is the curse, my Lord,
Of your high state ;—suspicion of all men.

RICHELIEU (*sadly*).

True ;—true ;—my leeches bribed to poisoners ;—pages
To strangle me in sleep.—My very King
(This brain the unresting loom, from which was woven
The purple of his greatness) leagued against me.
Old—childless—friendless—broken—all forsake—
All—all—but—

JOSEPH.

What ?

RICHELIEU.

The indomitable heart
Of Armand Richelieu !

510

JOSEPH.

Nought beside ?

RICHELIEU.

Why, Julie,
My own dear foster-child, forgive me !—yes ;
This morning, shining through their happy tears,
Thy soft eyes bless'd me !—and thy Lord,—in danger
He would forsake me not.

JOSEPH.

And Joseph—

* This tract, on the "Unity of the Minister," contains all the doctrines, and many more to the same effect, referred to in the text, and had a prodigious influence on the conscience of the poor king. At the onset of his career, Richelieu, as deputy of the clergy of Poitou, complained in his harangue to the king that ecclesiastics were too rarely summoned to the royal councils, and invoked the example of the Druids !

RICHELIEU (*after a pause*).

You——

Yes, I believe you—yes—for all men fear you—
 And the world loves you not.—And I, friend Joseph,
 I am the only man, who could, my Joseph,
 Make you a Bishop.*—Come, we'll go to dinner,
 And talk the while of methods to advance 520
 Our Mother Church.†—Ah, Joseph,—*Bishop Joseph!*

* Joseph's ambition was not, however, so moderate; he refused a bishopric, and desired the Cardinal's Hat, for which favour Richelieu openly supplicated the Holy See, but contrived somehow or other never to effect it, although two ambassadors applied for it at Rome.

† The peculiar religion of Père Joseph may be illustrated by the following anecdote:—An officer, whom he had dismissed upon an expedition into Germany, moved by conscience at the orders he had received, returned for farther explanations, and found the Capucin *disant sa messe*. He approached and whispered "But, my father, if these people defend themselves—" "Kill all" (*Qu'on tue tout*), answered the good father, continuing his devotions.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Second Day (Midnight).

SCENE I.

Richelieu's Castle at Ruelle — A Gothic chamber — Moonlight at the window, occasionally obscured.

RICHELIEU (*reading*).*

“In silence, and at night, the Conscience feels
That life should soar to nobler ends than Power.”
So sayest thou, sage and sober moralist!
But wert thou tried?—Sublime Philosophy,
Thou art the Patriarch's ladder, reaching heaven,
And bright with beck'ning angels—but, alas!
We see thee, like the Patriarch, but in dreams,
By the first step—dull-slumbering on the earth.
I am not happy!—with the Titan's lust
I woo'd a goddess, and I clasp a cloud. 10
When I am dust, my name shall, like a star,
Shine through wan space, a glory—and a prophet
Whereby pale seers shall from their æry towers
Con all the ominous signs, benign or evil,
That make the potent astrologue of kings.
But shall the Future judge me by the ends
That I have wrought—or by the dubious means
Through which the stream of my renown hath run
Into the many-voiced unfathomed Time?
Foul in its bed lie weeds—and heaps of slime, 20
And with its waves—when sparkling in the sun,
Oft times the secret rivulets that swell
Its might of waters—blend the hues of blood.
Yet are my sins not those of CIRCUMSTANCE,

* I need not say that the great length of this soliloquy adapts it only for the closet, and that but few of the lines are preserved on the stage. To the reader, however, the passages omitted in representation will not, perhaps, be the most uninteresting in the play, and may be deemed necessary to the completion of the Cardinal's portrait,—action on the stage supplying so subtly the place of words in the closet. The self-assured sophistries which, in the text, mingle with Richelieu's better-founded arguments in apology for the darker traits of his character, are to be found scattered throughout the writings ascribed to him. The reader will observe that in this self-confession lies the latent poetical justice,—which separates happiness from success.—[Lines retained on the stage from 28 to 40.]

That all-pervading atmosphere, wherein
 Our spirits, like the unsteady lizard, take
 The tints that colour, and the food that nurtures ?
 O ! ye, whose hour-glass shifts its tranquil sands
 In the unvex'd silence of a student's cell ;
 Ye, whose untempted hearts have never toss'd 30
 Upon the dark and stormy tides where life
 Gives battle to the elements,—and man
 Wrestles with man for some slight plank, whose weight
 Will bear but one—while round the desperate wretch
 The hungry billows roar—and the fierce Fate,
 Like some huge monster, dim-seen through the surf,
 Waits him who drops ;—ye safe and formal men,
 Who write the deeds, and with unfeverish hand
 Weigh in nice scales the motives of the Great,
 Ye cannot know what ye have never tried ! 40
 History preserves only the fleshless bones
 Of what we are—and by the mocking skull
 The would-be wise pretend to guess the features !
 Without the roundness and the glow of life
 How hideous is the skeleton ! Without
 The colourings and humanities that clothe
 Our errors, the anatomists of schools
 Can make our memory hideous !

I have wrought

Great uses out of evil tools—and they
 In the time to come may bask beneath the light 50
 Which I have stolen from the angry gods,
 And warn their sons against the glorious theft,
 Forgetful of the darkness which it broke.
 I have shed blood—but I have had no foes
 Save those the State had*—if my wrath was deadly,
 'Tis that I felt my country in my veins,
 And smote her sons as Brutus smote his own.†
 And yet I am not happy—blanch'd and sear'd
 Before my time—breathing an air of hate,
 And seeing daggers in the eyes of men, 60
 And wasting powers that shake the thrones of earth
 In contest with the insects—bearding kings
 And braved by lackies‡—murder at my bed ;

* It is well known that when, on his death-bed, Richelieu was asked if he forgave his enemies; he replied, "I never had any, but those of the State."
 And this was true enough, for Richelieu and the State were one.

† Richelieu's vindication of himself from cruelty will be found in various parts of Petitot's Collection, vols. *xxi.* *xxx.* (*bis.*)

‡ Voltaire has a striking passage on the singular fate of Richelieu, recalled every hour from his gigantic schemes to frustrate some miserable cabal of the

And lone amidst the multitudinous web,
 With the dread Three—that are the Fates who hold
 The woof and shears—the Monk, the Spy, the Headsman.
 And this is Power! Alas! I am not happy.

(*After a pause.*)

And yet the Nile is fretted by the weeds
 Its rising roots not up; but never yet
 Did one least barrier by a ripple vex 70
 My onward tide, unswept in sport away.
 Am I so ruthless then that I do hate
 Them who hate me? Tush, tush! I do not hate;
 Nay, I forgive. The Statesman writes the doom,
 But the Priest sends the blessing. I forgive them,
 But I destroy; forgiveness is mine own,
 Destruction is the State's! For private life,
 Scripture the guide—for public, Machiavel.
 Would Fortune serve me if the Heaven were wroth?
 For chance makes half my greatness. I was born 80
 Beneath the aspect of a bright-eyed star,
 And my triumphant adamant of soul
 Is but the fix'd persuasion of success.
 Ah!—here!—that spasm!—again!—How Life and Death
 Do wrestle for me momentarily!—And yet
 The King looks pale. I shall outlive the King!
 And then, thou insolent Austrian—who didst gibe
 At the ungainly, gaunt, and daring lover,*
 Sleeking thy looks to silken Buckingham,—
 Thou shalt—no matter!—I have outlived love. 90
 O! beautiful—all golden—gentle Youth!
 Making thy palace in the careless front
 And hopeful eye of man—ere yet the soul
 Hath lost the memories which (so Plato dream'd)

ante-room. Richelieu would often exclaim, that “*Six pieds de terre* (as he called the king's cabinet) lui donnaient plus de peine que tout le reste de l'Europe.” The death of Wallenstein, sacrificed by the Emperor Ferdinand, produced a most lively impression upon Richelieu. He found many traits of comparison between Ferdinand and Louis—Wallenstein and himself. In the Memoirs—now regarded by the best authorities as written by his sanction, and in great part by himself—the great Frenchman bursts (when alluding to Wallenstein's murder) into a touching and pathetic anathema on the *misère de cette vie* of dependence on jealous and timid royalty, which he himself, while he wrote, sustained. It is worthy of remark, that it was precisely at the period of Wallenstein's death that Richelieu obtained from the king an augmentation of his guard.

* Richelieu was commonly supposed, though I cannot say I find much evidence for it, to have been too presuming in an interview with Anne of Austria (the Queen), and to have bitterly resented the contempt she expressed for him. The Duke of Buckingham's frantic and Quixotic passion for the Queen is well known.

Breath'd glory from the earlier star it dwelt in—
 O! for one gale from thine exulting morning,
 Stirring amidst the roses, where of old
 Love shook the dew-drops from his glancing hair!
 Could I recall the past—or had not set
 The prodigal treasures of the bankrupt soul 100
 In one slight bark upon the shoreless sea ;
 The yoked steer, after his day of toil,
 Forgets the goad and rests—to me alike
 Or day or night—Ambition has no rest !
 Shall I resign—who can resign himself?
 For custom is ourself ;—as drink and food
 Become our bone and flesh—the aliments
 Nurturing our nobler part, the mind—thoughts, dreams,
 Passions, and aims, in the revolving cycle
 Of the great alchemy—at length are made 110
 Our mind itself ; and yet the sweets of leisure—
 An honour'd home—far from these base intrigues—
 An eyrie on the heaven-kiss'd heights of wisdom—

(Taking up the book.)

Speak to me, moralist !—I'll heed thy counsel.
 Were it not best—

(Enter François hastily, and in part disguised.)

RICHELIEU *(flinging away the book).*

Philosophy, thou liest !

Quick—the despatch !—Power—Empire ! Boy—the packet !

FRANÇOIS.

Kill me, my Lord.

RICHELIEU.

They knew thee—they suspected—

They gave it not—

FRANÇOIS.

He gave it—he—the Count

De Baradas—with his own hand he gave it !

RICHELIEU.

Baradas. Joy ! out with it !

FRANÇOIS.

Listen,

And then dismiss me to the headsmen. 120

RICHELIEU.

Ha !

Go on.

FRANCOIS.

They led me to a chamber—There
Orleans and Baradas—and some half-score,
Whom I know not—were met——

RICHELIEU.

Not more !

FRANCOIS.

But from
The 'adjoining chamber broke the din of voices,
The clattering tread of armed men ;—at times
A shriller cry, that yell'd out, " Death to Richelieu !"

RICHELIEU.

Speak not of *me* : thy *country* is in danger !
The 'adjoining room—So, so—a *separate* treason !
The one thy ruin, France !—the meaner crime,
Left to their tools, my murder !—

130

FRANCOIS.

Baradas
Questioned me close—demurr'd—until, at last,
O'erruled by Orleans,—gave the packet—told me
That life and death were in the scroll—this gold—

RICHELIEU.

Gold is no proof—

FRANCOIS.

And Orleans promised thousands,
When Bouillon's trumpets in the streets of Paris
Rang out shrill answer ;—hastening from the house,
My footstep in the stirrup, Marion stole
Across the threshold, whispering " Lose no moment,
Ere Richelieu have the packet : tell him too—
Murder is in the winds of Night, and Orleans
Swears, ere the dawn the Cardinal shall be clay."
She said, and trembling fled within ; when, lo !
A hand of iron griped me ; thro' the dark
Gleam'd the dim shadow of an armed man :
Ere I could draw—the prize was wrested from me,
And a hoarse voice gasp'd—" Spy, I spare thee, for
This steel is virgin to thy Lord !"—with that
He vanish'd.—Scared and trembling for thy safety,
I mounted, fled, and, kneeling at thy feet,

140

150

Implore thee to acquit my faith—but not,
Like him, to spare my life.—

RICHELIEU.

Who spake of *life* ?

I bade thee grasp that treasure as thine *honour*—
A jewel worth whole hecatombs of lives !
Begone—redeem thine honour—back to Marion—
Or Baradas—or Orleans—track the robber—
Regain the packet—or crawl on to Age—
Age and grey hairs like mine—and know, thou hast lost
That which had made thee great and saved thy country.—
See me not till thou’st bought the right to seek me.— 160
Away !—Nay, cheer thee—thou hast not fail’d yet,—
There’s no such word as “fail !”

FRANÇOIS.

Bless you, my Lord,
For that one smile !—I’ll wear it on my heart
To light me back to triumph.* (*Exit.*)

RICHELIEU.

The poor youth !

An elder had ask’d life !—I love the young !
For as great men live not in their own time,
But the next race,—so in the young, my soul
Makes many Richelieus.—He will win it yet.
François !—He’s gone. My murder ! Marion’s warning !
This bravo’s threat ! O for the morrow’s dawn !— 170
I’ll set my spies to work—I’ll make all space
(As does the sun) an Universal Eye—
Huguet shall track—Joseph confess—ha ! ha !—
Strange, while I laugh’d I shudder’d, and ev’n now
Thro’ the chill air the beating of my heart
Sounds like a death-watch by a sick man’s pillow ;
If Huguet *could* deceive me—hoofs without—
The gates uncloset—steps near and nearer !

(*Enter Julie.*)

JULIE.

Cardinal !

My father ! (*falls at his feet.*)

* The fear and the hatred which Richelieu generally inspired were not shared by his dependants and those about his person, who are said “to have adored him.”—Ses domestiques le regardaient comme le meilleur des maîtres.—Le Clerc. In fact, although *il étoit orgueilleux et colère*,—he was, *en même temps*, *affable et plein de douceur dans l’abord*; and he was no less generous to those who served than severe to those who opposed him.

RICHELIEU.

Julie at this hour!—and tears!
What ails thee?

180

JULIE.

I am safe; I am with thee!—

RICHELIEU.

Safe! why in all the storms of this wild world
What wind would mar the violet?

JULIE.

That man—
Why did I love him?—clinging to a breast
That knows no shelter?

Listen—late at noon—
The marriage-day—ev'n then no more a lover—
He left me coldly,—well,—I sought my chamber
To weep and wonder—but to hope and dream.
Sudden a mandate from the king—to attend
Forthwith his pleasure at the Louvre.

190

RICHELIEU.

Ha!—
You did obey the summons; and the king
Reproach'd your hasty nuptials.—

JULIE.

Were that all!
He frown'd and chid;—proclaim'd the bond unlawful:
Bade me not quit my chamber in the palace,
And there at night—alone—this night—all still—
He sought my presence—dared—thou read'st the heart,
Read mine!—I cannot speak it!

RICHELIEU.

He a king,—
You—woman; well,—you yielded!

JULIE.

Cardinal—
Dare you say “yielded?”—Humbled and abash'd,
He from the chamber crept—this mighty Louis;
Crept like a baffled felon!—yielded! Ah!
More royalty in woman's honest heart
Than dwells within the crowned majesty
And sceptred anger of a hundred kings!
Yielded!—Heavens!—yielded;

200

RICHELIEU.

To my breast,—close—close !
 The world would never need a Richelieu, if
 Men—bearded, mailed men—the Lords of Earth—
 Resisted flattery, falsehood, avarice, pride,
 As this poor child with the dove's innocent scorn 210
 Her sex's tempters, Vanity and Power!—
 He left you—well !

JULIE.

Then came a sharper trial !
 At the king's suit the Count de Baradas
 Sought me to soothe, to fawn, to flatter, while
 On his smooth lip insult appear'd more hateful
 For the false mask of pity : letting fall
 Dark hints of treachery, with a world of sighs
 That heaven had granted to so base a Lord
 The heart whose coldest friendship were to him
 What Mexico to misers ! Stung at last 220
 By my disdain, the dim and glimmering sense
 Of his cloak'd words broke into bolder light,
 And THEN—ah ! then, my haughty spirit fail'd me !
 Then I was weak—wept—oh ! such bitter tears !
 For (turn thy face aside, and let me whisper
 The horror to thine ear) then did I learn
 That he—that Adrien—that my husband—knew
 The king's polluting suit, and deemed it *honour* !
 Then all the terrible and loathsome truth
 Glared on me ;—coldness—waywardness—reserve— 230
 Mystery of looks—words—all unravell'd,—and
 I saw the impostor, where I ha loved the God !—

RICHELIEU.

I think thou wrong'st thy husband—but proceed.

JULIE.

Did you say “ wrong'd ” him ?—Cardinal, my father,
 Did you say “ wrong'd ? ” Prove it, and life shall grow
 One prayer for thy reward and his forgiveness.

RICHELIEU.

Let me know all.

JULIE.

To the despair he caused
 The courtier left me ; but amid the chaos
 Darted one guiding ray—to 'scape—to fly—

Reach Adrien, learn the worst—'twas then near midnight : 240
 Trembling I left my chamber—sought the queen—
 Fell at her feet—reveal'd the unholy peril—
 Implored her aid to flee our joint disgrace.
 Moved, she embraced and soothed me ; nay, preserved ;
 Her word sufficed to unlock the palace-gates :
 I hasten'd home—but home was desolate,—
 No Adrien there ! Fearing the worst, I fled
 To thee, directed hither. As my wheels
 Paused at thy gates—the clang of arms behind—
 The ring of hoofs—

RICHELIEU.

'Twas but my guards, fair trembler. 250
 (So Huguet keeps his word, my omens wrong'd him.)

JULIE.

Oh, in one hour what years of anguish crowd !

RICHELIEU.

Nay, there's no danger now. Thou needest rest.
 Come, thou shalt lodge beside me. Tush ! be cheer'd,
 My rosiest Amazon—thou wrong'st thy Theseus.
 All will be well—yes, yet all well.

[*Exeunt through a side door.*]

SCENE II.

Enter HUGUET—DE MAUPRAT, in complete armour, his vizor down.

(*The moonlight obscured at the casement.*)

HUGUET.

Not here !

DE MAUPRAT.

Oh, I will find him, fear not. Hence, and guard
 The galleries where the menials sleep—plant sentries
 At every outlet—Chance should throw no shadow
 Between the vengeance and the victim ! Go !—
 Ere yon brief vapour that obscures the moon,
 As doth our deed pale conscience, pass away,
 The mighty shall be ashes.

HUGUET.

Will you not

A second arm ?

DE MAUPRAT.

To slay one weak old man ?—

Away ! No lesser wrongs than mine can make
This murder lawful.—Hence !

HUGUET.

A short farewell !

[Exit HUGUET.]

Re-enter RICHELIEU (not perceiving DE MAUPRAT).

RICHELIEU.

How heavy is the air !—the vestal lamp
Of the sad Moon, weary with vigil, dies
In the still temple of the solemn heaven !
The very darkness lends itself to fear—
To treason—

270

DE MAUPRAT.

And to death !

RICHELIEU.

My omens lied not !

What art thou, wretch ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Thy doomsman !

RICHELIEU.

Ho, my guards !

Huguet ! Montbrassil ! Vermont !

DE MAUPRAT.

Ay, thy spirits

Forsake thee, wizard ; thy bold men of mail
Are *my confederates*. Stir not ! but one step,
And know the next—thy grave !

RICHELIEU.

Thou liest, knave !

I am old, infirm—most feeble—but thou liest !
Armand de Richelieu dies not by the hand
Of man—the stars have said it*—and the voice

280

* In common with his contemporaries, Richelieu was credulous in astrology less lawful arts. He was too fortunate a man not to be superstitious.

Of my own prophet and oracular soul
 Confirms the shining Sibyls! Call them all—
 Thy brother butchers! Earth has no such fiend—
 No! as one parricide of his father-land,
 Who dares in Richelieu murder France!

DE MAUPRAT.

Thy stars

Deceive thee, Cardinal; thy soul of wiles
 May against kings and armaments avail,
 And mock the embattled world; but powerless now 290
 Against the sword of one resolved man,
 Upon whose forehead thou hast written shame!

RICHELIEU.

I breathe;—he is not a hireling. Have I wronged thee?
 Beware surmise—suspicion—lies! I am
 Too great for men to speak the truth of me!

DE MAUPRAT.

Thy *acts* are thy accusers, Cardinal!
 In his hot youth, a soldier, urged to crime
 Against the State, placed in your hands his life;—
 You did not strike the blow—but, o'er his head,
 Upon the gossamer thread of your caprice, 300
 Hovered the axe.—His the brave spirit's hell,
 The twilight terror of suspense;—your death
 Had set him free:—he purposed not, nor prayed it.
 One day you summoned—mocked him with smooth pardon—
 Showered wealth upon him—bade an Angel's face
 Turn Earth to Paradise—

RICHELIEU.

Well!

DE MAUPRAT.

Was this mercy?

A Cæsar's generous vengeance?—Cardinal, no!
 Judas, not Cæsar, was the model! You
 Saved him from death for shame; reserved to grow
 The scorn of living men—to his dead sires 310
 Leprous reproach—scoff of the age to come—
 A kind convenience—a Sir Pandarus
 To his own bride, and the august adulterer!
 Then did the first great law of human hearts,
 Which with the patriot's, not the rebel's, name

Crowned the first Brutus, when the Tarquin fell,
 Make Misery royal—raise this desperate wretch
 Into thy destiny ! Expect no mercy !
 Behold De Mauprat !

(*Lifts his vizor.*)

RICHELIEU.

To thy knees, and crawl
 For pardon ; or, I tell thee, thou shalt live 320
 For such remorse, that, did I hate thee, I
 Would bid thee strike, that I might be avenged !—
 It was to save my Julie from the King,
 That in thy valour I forgave thy crime ;—
 It was, when thou—the rash and ready tool—
 Yea, of that shame thou loath'st—did'st leave thy hearth
 To the polluter—in these arms thy bride
 Found the protecting shelter thine withheld.

(*Goes to the side door.*)

Julie de Mauprat—Julie !

Enter Julie.

Lo ! my witness !

DE MAUPRAT.

What marvel's this ?—I dream ! My Julie—*thou* ! 330
 This, thy beloved hand ?

JULIE.

Henceforth all bond
 Between us twain is broken. Were it not
 For this old man, I might, in truth, have lost
 The right—now mine—to scorn thee !

RICHELIEU.

So, you hear her ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Thou with some slander hast her sense infected !

JULIE.

No, Sir : he did excuse thee in despite
 Of all that wears the face of truth. Thy friend—
 Thy *confidant*—familiar—*Baradas*—
 Himself revealed thy baseness,

DE MAUPRAT.

Baseness !

RICHELIEU.

Ay ; 340

That *thou* didst court dishonour.

DE MAUPRAT.

Baradas !

Where is thy thunder, Heaven?—Duped!—snared!—undone!
Thou—thou could'st not believe him! Thou dost love me!
Love cannot feed on falsehoods!

JULIE (*aside*).

Love him!—Ah!

Be still, my heart! Love you I did :—how fondly,
Woman—if women were my listeners now—
Alone could tell!—For ever fled my dream :
Farewell—all's over!

RICHELIEU.

Nay, my daughter, these
Are but the blinding mists of day-break love
Sprung from its very light, and heralding 350
A noon of happy summer.—Take her hand
And speak the truth, with which your heart runs over—
That this Count Judas—this Incarnate Falsehood—
Never lied more, than when he told thy Julie
That Adrien loved her not—except, indeed,
When he told Adrien, Julie could betray him.

JULIE (*embracing De Mauprat*).

You love me, then!—you love me!—and they wrong'd you!

DE MAUPRAT.

Ah! could'st thou doubt it?

RICHELIEU.

Why, the very mole
Less blind than thou! Baradas loves thy wife;—
Had hoped her hand—aspired to be that cloak 360
To the king's will, which to thy bluntness seems
The Centaur's poisonous robe—hopes even now
To make thy corpse his footstool to thy bed!
Where was thy wit, man?—Ho! these schemes are glass!
The very sun shines through them.

DE MAUPRAT.

O, my Lord,

Can you forgive you?

RICHELIEU.

Ay, and save you!

DE MAUPRAT.

Save!—

Terrible word!—O, save *thyself*:—these halls
 Swarm with thy foes: already for thy blood
 Pants thirsty Murder!

JULIE.

Murder!

RICHELIEU.

Hush! put by

370

The woman. Hush! a shriek—a cry—a breath
 Too loud, would startle from its horrent pause
 The swooping Death! Go to the door, and listen!—
 Now for escape!

DE MAUPRAT.

None—none! Their blades shall pass
 This heart to thine.

RICHELIEU (*drily*).

/ An honourable outwork,
 But much too near the citadel. / I think
 That I can trust you now (*slowly, and gazing on him*):—yes;
 I can trust you.
 How many of my troop league with you?

DE MAUPRAT.

All!—

We *are* your troop!

RICHELIEU.

And Huguet?—

DE MAUPRAT.

Is our captain.

RICHELIEU.

A retribution Power!—This comes of spies!
 All? then the lion's skin too short to-night,—
 Now for the fox's!—

380

JULIE.

A hoarse, gathering murmur!—
 Hurrying and heavy footsteps!—

RICHELIEU.

Ha!—the posterns?

DE MAUPRAT.

No egress where no sentry !

RICHELIEU.

Follow me—

**I have it!—to my chamber—quick! Come, Julie!
Hush! Mauprat, come!**

Murmur at a distance—Death to the Cardinal!

RICHELIEU.

Bloodhounds, I laugh at ye!—ha! ha!—we will baffle them yet.—Ha!—ha!

Exeunt Julie, Mauprat, Richelieu.

HUGUET (*without*).

This way—this way !

SCENE III.

Enter Huguet and the Conspirators.

HUGUET.

De Mauprat's hand is never slow in battle ;—
Strange, if it falter now ! Ha ! gone !

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Perchance

The fox had crept to rest ; and to his lair
Death, the dark hunter, tracks him. 390

Enter Mauprat (throwing open the doors of the recess, in which a bed, whereon Richelieu lies extended.)

MAUPRAT.

Live the King!

Richelieu is dead !

HUGUET (*advancing towards the recess ; MAUPRAT following, his hand on his dagger*).

Are his eyes open?

DE MAUPRAT.

Ay.

As if in life !

HUGUET (*turning back*).

I will not look on him.
You have been long.

DE MAUPRAT.

I watch'd him till he slept.
Heed me.—No trace of blood reveals the deed ;—
Strangled in sleep. His health hath long been broken—
Found breathless in his bed. So runs our tale,
Remember ! Back to Paris—Orleans gives
Ten thousand crowns, and Baradas a lordship,
To him who first gluts vengeance with the news 400
That Richelieu is in heaven ! Quick, that all France
May share your joy !

HUGUET.

And you ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Will stay, to crush
Eager suspicion—to forbid sharp eyes
To dwell too closely on the clay ; prepare
The rites, and place him on his bier—this *my* task.
I leave to you, sirs, the more grateful lot
Of wealth and honours. Hence !

HUGUET.

I shall be noble !

DE MAUPRAT.

Away !

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Five thousand crowns !

OMNES.

To horse !—to horse !

[*Exeunt Conspirators.*]

SCENE IV.

Still night.—A room in the house of Count De Baradas, lighted, &c.

Orleans, De Beringhen.

DE BERINGHEN.

I understand. Mauprat kept guard without :
Knows nought of the despatch—but heads the troop 410
Whom the poor Cardinal fancies his protectors.
Save us from such protection !

ORLEANS.

Yet, if Huguet,
By whose advice and proffers we renounced
Our earlier scheme, should still be Richelieu's minion,
And play us false—

DE BERINGHEN.

The fox must then devour
The geese he gripes, (I'm out of it, thank Heaven !)
And you must swear you smelt the trick, but seem'd
To approve the deed—to render up the doers.

Enter BARADAS.

BARADAS.

Julie is fled :—the King, whom now I left
To a most thorny pillow, vows revenge 420
On her—on Mauprat—and on Richelieu ! Well ;
We loyal men anticipate his wish
Upon the last—and as for Mauprat, —

(Showing a writ.)

DE BERINGHEN.

Hum !

They say the devil invented printing ! Faith,
He has some hand in writing parchment—eh, Count ?
What mischief now ?

BARADAS.

The King, at Julie's flight
Enraged, will brook no rival in a subject—
So on this old offence—the affair of Faviaux—
Ere Mauprat can tell tales of *us*, we build
His bridge between the dungeon and the grave. 430

ORLEANS.

Well ; if our courier can but reach the army,
The cards are ours !—and yet, I own, I tremble.
Our names are in the scroll—discovery, death !

BARADAS.

Success, a crown !

DE BERINGHEN (*apart to Baradas*).

Our future regent is

No hero.

BARADAS (*to De Beringhen*).

But his rank makes others valiant ;
And on his cowardice I mount to power.
Were Orleans Regent—what were Baradas ?
Oh ! by the way—I had forgot, your highness,
Friend Huguet whisper'd me, " Beware of Marion :
I've seen her lurking near the Cardinal's palace." 440
Upon that hint—I've found her lodgings elsewhere.

ORLEANS.

You wrong her, Count :—Poor Marion !—she adores me.

BARADAS (*apologetically*).

Forgive me, but——

Enter Page.

PAGE.

My Lord, a rude, strange soldier,
Breathless with haste, demands an audience.

BARADAS.

—So !

The archers ?

PAGE.

In the ante-room, my Lord,
As you desired.

BARADAS.

'Tis well—admit the soldier.

[*Exit Page.*

Huguet ! I bade him seek me here !

Enter Huguet.

HUGUET.

My Lords,
The deed is done. Now, Count, fulfil your word,
And make me noble !

BARADAS.

Richelieu dead?—art sure?

How died he?

HUGUET.

Strangled in his sleep:—no blood, 450
No tell-tale violence.

BARADAS.

Strangled? monstrous villain!

Reward for murder! Ho, there!

[Stamping.

Enter Captain, with five Archers.

HUGUET.

No, thou durst not!

BARADAS.

Seize on the ruffian—bind him—gag him! Off
To the Bastile!

HUGUET.

Your word—your plighted faith!

BARADAS.

Insolent liar!—ho, away!

HUGUET.

Nay, Count;

I have that about me, which——

BARADAS.

Away with him!

[*Exeunt Huguet and Archers.*]

Now, then, all's safe; Huguet must die in prison,
So Mauprat:—coax or force the meaner crew
To fly the country. Ha, ha! thus, your highness,
Great men make use of little men.

DE BERINGHEN.

My Lords,

460

Since our suspense is ended—you'll excuse me;
'Tis late—and, *entre nous*, I have not supp'd yet!
I'm one of the new Council now, remember;
I feel the public stirring here already;
A very craving monster. *Au revoir!*

[*Exit de Beringhen.*]

ORLEANS.

No fear, now Richelieu's dead.

BARADAS.

And could he come
 To life again, he could not keep life's life—
 His power,—nor save De Mauprat from the scaffold,—
 Nor Julie from these arms—nor Paris from
 The Spaniard—nor your highness from the throne ! 470
 All ours ! all ours ! in spite of my Lord Cardinal !

Enter Page.

PAGE.

A gentleman, my Lord, of better mien
 Than he who last—

BARADAS.

Well, he may enter.

[Exit Page.]

ORLEANS.

Who

Can this be ?

BARADAS.

One of the conspirators :
 Mauprat himself, perhaps.

Enter François.

FRANCOIS.

My Lord——

BARADAS.

Ha, traitor !

In Paris still ?

FRANCOIS.

The packet—the despatch—
 Some knave play'd spy without, and reft it from me,
 Ere I could draw my sword.

BARADAS.

Play'd spy *without* !

Did he wear armour ?

FRANCOIS.

Ay, from head to heel.

ORLEANS.

One of our band. Oh, heavens !

BARADAS.

Could it be Mauprat? 480
Kept guard at the *door*—knew *nought of the despatch*—
How *HE*?—and yet, who other?

FRANCOIS.

Ha, De Mauprat!
The night was dark—his vizor closed.

BARADAS.

'Twas he!
How could he guess?—'sdeath! if he should betray us.
His hate to Richelieu dies with Richelieu—and
He was not great enough for treason.—Hence!
Find Mauprat—beg, steal, filch, or force it back,
Or, as I live, the halter—

FRANCOIS.

By the morrow
I will regain it, (*aside*) and redeem my honour!
(*Exit FRANCOIS.*)

ORLEANS.

Oh! we are lost—

BARADAS.

Not so! But cause on cause 490
For Mauprat's seizure—silence—death! Take courage.

ORLEANS.

Should it once reach the King, the Cardinal's arm
Could smite us from the grave.

BARADAS.

Sir, think it not!
I hold De Mauprat in my grasp. To-morrow
And France is ours!—Thou dark and fallen Angel,
Whose name on earth's AMBITION—thou that mak'st
Thy throne on treasons, stratagems, and murder—
And with thy fierce and blood-red smile canst quench
The guiding stars of solemn empire—hear us—
(For we are thine)—and light us to the goal! 500

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Third Day.

SCENE I.

The Gardens of the Louvre.—Orleans, Baradas, De Beringhen, Courtiers, &c.

ORLEANS.

How does my brother bear the Cardinal's death ?

BARADAS.

With grief, when thinking of the toils of State ;
With joy, when thinking on the eyes of Julie :—
At times he sighs, " Who now shall govern France ?"
Anon exclaims—" Who now shall baffle Louis ?"

(*Enter Louis and other Courtiers. They uncover.*)

ORLEANS.

Now, my liege, now, I can embrace a brother.

LOUIS.

Dear Gaston, yes.—I do believe you *love* me ;—
Richelieu denied it—sever'd us too long.
A great man, Gaston ! Who shall govern France ?

BARADAS.

Yourself, my liege. That swart and potent star 10
Eclipsed your royal orb. He serv'd the country,
But did he *serve*, or seek to *sway* the King ?

LOUIS.

You're right—he was an able politician *—
That's all :—between ourselves, Count, I suspect
The largeness of his learning—specially
In falcons†—a poor huntsman, too !

* Omitted in representation from line 13 to 66.

† Louis XIII. is said to have possessed some natural talents, and in earlier youth to have exhibited the germs of noble qualities ; but a blight seems to have passed over his maturer life. Personally brave, but morally timid,—always governed, whether by his mother or his minister, and always repining at the yoke. The only affection amounting to a passion that he betrayed was for

BARADAS.

Ha—ha!

Your Majesty remembers—

LOUIS.

Ay, the blunder

Between the *greffier* and the *souillard* when—*(Checks and crosses himself.)*

Alas! poor sinners that we are! we laugh

While this great man—a priest, a cardinal,

20

A faithful servant—out upon us!—

BARADAS.

Sire,

If my brow wear no cloud, 'tis that the Cardinal

No longer shades the King.

LOUIS *(looking up at the skies)*.

Oh, Baradas!

Am I not to be pitied?—what a day

For—

BARADAS.

Sorrow?—No, sire!

LOUIS.

Bah! for *hunting*, man.

And Richelieu's dead; 'twould be an indecorum

Till he is buried—*(yawns)*—life is very tedious.

I made a madrigal on life last week:

You do not sing,* Count?—Pity; you should learn.

Poor Richelieu had no ear—yet a great man.

30

Ah! what a weary weight devolves upon me!

These endless wars—these thankless Parliaments—

the sports of the field; yet it was his craving weakness (and this throws a kind of false interest over his character,) to wish to be loved. He himself loved no one. He suffered the only woman who seems to have been attached to him to wither in a convent—he gave up favourite after favourite to exile or the block. When Richelieu died, he said coldly, "*Voilà un grand politique mort!*" and when the ill-fated but unprincipled Cinq Mars, whom he called *le cher ami*, was beheaded, he drew out his watch at the fatal hour, and said with a smile, "*I think at this moment that le cher ami fait une vilaine mine.*" Nevertheless his conscience at times (for he was devout and superstitious) made him gentle, and his pride and his honour would often, when least expected, rouse him into haughty but brief resistance to the despotism under which he lived.

* Louis had some musical taste and accomplishment, wherewith he often communicated to his favourites some of that wearisome ennui under which he himself almost unceasingly languished.

The snares in which he tangled States and Kings,
Like the old fisher of the fable, Proteus,
Netting great Neptune's wariest tribes, and changing
Into all shapes when Craft pursued himself :
Oh, a great man !

BARADAS.

Your royal mother said so,
And died in exile.

LOUIS (*sadly*).

True : I loved my mother ! *

BARADAS.

The Cardinal dies.—Yet day revives the earth ;
The rivers run not back. In truth, my liege, 40
Did your high orb on others shine as him,
Why, things as dull in their own selves as I am
Would glow as brightly with the borrowed beam. †

LOUIS.

Ahem !—He was too stern.

ORLEANS.

A very Nero.

BARADAS.

His power was like the Capitol of old—
Built on a human skull.

LOUIS.

And, had he lived,
I know another head, my Baradas,

* One of Louis's most bitter complaints against Richelieu was the continued banishment of the Queen Mother. It is impossible, however, not to be convinced that the return of that most worthless intrigante was wholly incompatible with the tranquillity of the kingdom. Yet, on the other hand, the poverty and privation which she endured in exile, are discreditable to the generosity and the gratitude of Richelieu—she was his first patron, though afterwards his most powerful persecutor.

† In his Memoirs Richelieu gives an amusing account of the insolence and arts of Baradas, and observes, with indignant astonishment, that the favourite was never weary of repeating to the King that he (Baradas) would have made just as great a minister as Richelieu. It is on the attachment of Baradas to La Cressias, a maid of honour to the Queen Mother, of whom, according to Baradas, the King was enamoured also, that his love for the Julie de Mortemar of the play has been founded. The secret of Baradas' sudden and extraordinary influence with the King seems to rest in the personal adoration which he professed for Louis, with whom he affected all the jealousy of a lover, but whom he flattered with the ardent chivalry of a knight. Even after his disgrace he placed upon his banner, "Fiat voluntas tua."

That would have propp'd the pile : I've seen him eye thee
With a most hungry fancy.

BARADAS (*anxiously*).

Sire, I knew

You would protect me.

LOUIS.

Did you so : of course !

50

And yet he had a way with him—a something
That always——But no matter—he is dead.
And, after all, men called his King “ The Just,”*
And so I am. Dear Count, this silliest Julie,
I know not why, she takes my fancy. Many
As fair, and certainly more kind ; but yet
It is so. Count, I am no lustful Tarquin,
And do abhor the bold and frontless vices
Which the Church justly censures ; yet, 'tis sad
On rainy days to drag out weary hours †—
Deaf to the music of a woman's voice—
Blind to the sunshine of a woman's eyes.
It is no sin in Kings to seek amusement ;
And that is all I seek. I miss her much—
She has a silver laugh—a rare perfection.

60

BARADAS.

Richelieu was most disloyal in that marriage.

LOUIS (*querulously*).

He knew that Julie pleased me :—a clear proof
He never loved me !

BARADAS.

Oh, most clear !—But now

No bar between the lady and your will !
This writ makes all secure : a week or two
In the Bastile will sober Mauprat's love,
And leave him eager to dissolve a hymen
That brings him such a home.

70

* Louis was called The Just, but for no other reason than that he was born under the Libra.

† Louis XIII. did not resemble either his father or his son in the ardour of his attachments ; if not wholly platonic, they were wholly unimpassioned : yet no man was more jealous, or more unscrupulously tyrannical when the jealousy was aroused.

LOUIS.

See to it, Count ;

(Exit Baradas.)

I'll summon Julie back. A word with you.

(Takes aside First Courtier and De Beringhen, and passes, conversing with them, through the gardens.)

Enter Francois.

FRANCOIS.

All search, as yet, in vain for Mauprat !—Not
At home since yesternoon—a soldier told me
He saw him pass this way with hasty strides ;
Should he meet Baradas—they'd rend it from him—
And then—benignant Fortune smiles upon me—
I am thy son !—if thou desert'st me now,
Come, Death and snatch me from disgrace. But, no,
There's a great Spirit ever in the air
That from prolific and far-spreading wings
Scatters the seeds of honour—yea, the walls
And moats of castled forts—the barren seas,
The cell wherein the pale-eyed student holds
Talk with melodious science—all are sown
With everlasting honours, if our souls
Will toil for fame as boors for bread—

80

(Enter Mauprat.)

MAUPRAT.

Oh, let me—

90

Let me but meet him foot to foot—I'll dig
The Judas from his heart ;—albeit the King
Should o'er him cast the purple !

FRANCOIS.

Mauprat ! hold :—

Where is the——

MAUPRAT.

Well ! What would'st thou ?

FRANCOIS.

The despatch !

The packet.—LOOK ON ME—I serve the Cardinal—
You know me.—Did you not keep guard last night
By Marion's house ?

MAUPRAT.

I did :—no matter now !—

They told me, *he was here* !—

FRANCOIS.

O joy! quick—quick—
The packet thou didst wrest from me?

MAUPRAT.

The packet?—
What art thou he, I deem'd the Cardinal's spy 100
(Dupe that I was)— and overhearing Marion—

FRANCOIS.

The same—restore it!—haste!

MAUPRAT.

I have it not:—
Methought it but reveal'd our scheme to Richelieu,
And, as we mounted, gave it to—
(*Enter Baradas.*)

Stand back!

Now, villain! now—I have thee!

(*To François.*)—Hence, Sir!—*Draw!*

FRANCOIS.

Art mad?—the King's at hand! leave *him* to Richelieu!
Speak—the despatch—to whom—

MAUPRAT (*dashing him aside and rushing to Baradas.*)

Thou triple slanderer!

I'll set my heel upon thy crest!

(*A few passes.*)

FRANCOIS.

Fly—fly!—

The King!—

*Enter at one side Louis, Orleans, De Beringhen, Courtiers.
&c.—at the other, the Guards hastily.*

LOUIS.

Swords drawn—before our very palace!—
Have our laws died with Richelieu?

BARADAS.

Pardon, Sire,— 110
*My crime but self-defence.** (*Aside to King.*) It is De
Mauprat!

* One of Richelieu's severest and least politic laws was that which made duelling a capital crime. Never was the punishment against the offence more relentlessly enforced; and never were duels so desperate and so numerous. The punishment of death must be evidently ineffectual so long as to refuse a duel is to be dishonoured, and so long as men hold the doctrine, however wrong, that it is better to part with the life that Heaven gave than the honour man makes. In fact, the greater the danger he incurred, the greater was the punctilio of the cavalier of that time in braving it.

LOUIS.

Dare he thus brave us ?

(Baradas goes to the guard and gives the writ.)

MAUPRAT.

Sire, in the Cardinal's name —

BARADAS.

Seize him—disarm—to the Bastile !

(De Mauprat seized, struggles with the guard—François restlessly endeavouring to pacify and speak to him—when the gates open. Enter Richelieu—Joseph—followed by arquebussiers.)

BARADAS.

The Dead

Return'd to life !

LOUIS.

What a *mock* death ! this tops

The Infinite of Insult.

DE MAUPRAT *(breaking from the guards)*.

Priest and Hero !—

For you are both—protect the truth !—

RICHELIEU *(taking the writ from the guard.)*

What's this ?

DE BERINGHEN.

Fact in Philosophy. Foxes have got
Nine lives, as well as cats !—

BARADAS.

Be firm, my liege.

LOUIS.

I have assumed the sceptre—I will wield it !

JOSEPH.

The tide runs counter—there'll be shipwreck somewhere. 120
(Baradas and Orleans keep close to the King—whispering and prompting him when Richelieu speaks.)

RICHELIEU.

High treason—Faviaux ! still that stale pretence !
My liege, bad men (ay, Count, most *knavish* men !)
Abuse your royal goodness.—For this soldier,
France hath none braver—and his youth's hot folly,
Misled—(by whom *your Highness* may conjecture !)—
Is long since cancell'd by a loyal manhood.—
I, Sire, have pardoned him.

LOUIS.

And we do give
Your pardon to the winds.—Sir, do your duty !

RICHELIEU.

What, Sire ?—you do not know—Oh, pardon me—
You know not yet, that this brave, honest, heart 130
Stood between mine and murder !—Sire ! for my sake—
For your old servant's sake—undo this wrong.
See, let me rend the sentence.

LOUIS.

At your peril !
This is too much :—Again, Sir, do your duty !

RICHELIEU.

Speak not, but go :—I would not see young Valour
So humbled as grey Service !

DE MAUPRAT.

Fare you well !
Save Julie, and console her.

FRANCOIS (*aside to Mauprat*).

The despatch !
Your fate, foes, life, hang on a word !—to whom ?

DE MAUPRAT.

To Huguet.

FRANCOIS.

Hush—keep council !—silence—hope !
(*Exeunt Mauprat and Guard.*)

BARADAS (*aside to François*).

Has he the packet ?

FRANCOIS.

He will not reveal— 140
(*Aside.*) Work, brain !—beat, heart !—“ *There's no such word
as fail.*”

(*Exit François.*)RICHELIEU (*fiercely*).

Room, my Lords, room !—The minister of France
Can need no intercession with the King.

(*They fall back.*)

LOUIS.

What means this false report of death, Lord Cardinal ?

RICHELIEU.

Are you then anger'd, Sire, that I live still ?

LOUIS.

No ; but such artifice—

RICHELIEU.

Not mine :—look elsewhere !

Louis—my castle swarm'd with the assassins.

BARADAS (*advancing*).

We have punish'd them already. Huguet now
In the Bastile.—Oh ! my Lord, *we* were prompt
To avenge you—*we* were—

RICHELIEU.

WE ?—Ha ! ha ! you hear, 150

My liege ! What page, man, in the last court grammar
Made you a plural ?—Count, you have seized the *hireling* :—
Sire, shall I name the *master* !

LOUIS.

Tush ! my Lord,

The old contrivance :—ever does your wit
Invent assassins,—that ambition may
Slay rivals—

RICHELIEU.

Rivals, sire !—in what ?

Service to France ? *I have none* ! Lives the man
Whom Europe, paled before your glory, deems
Rival to Armand Richelieu ?

LOUIS.

What, so haughty !

Remember, he who made, can unmake.

160

RICHELIEU.

Never !

Never ! Your anger can recall your trust,
Annul my office, spoil me of my lands,
Rifle my coffers,—but my name—my deeds,
Are royal in a land beyond your sceptre !
Pass sentence on me, if you will ; from Kings,
Lo, I appeal to Time ! *Be just, my liege—
I found your kingdom rent with heresies
And bristling with rebellion ; lawless nobles
And breadless serfs ; England fomenting discord ;
Austria—her clutch on your dominion ; Spain
Forging the prodigal gold of either Ind
To armed thunderbolts. The Arts lay dead,
Trade rotted in your marts, your Armies mutinous,
Your Treasury bankrupt. Would you now revoke

170

* Omitted in representation, from "Be just," &c., line 167, to line 188.

Your trust, so be it! and I leave you, sole
 Supremest Monarch of the mightiest realm,
 From Ganges to the Icebergs :—Look without
 No foe not humbled !—Look within ; the Arts
 Quit for your schools—their old Hesperides
 The golden Italy ! while through the veins
 Of your vast empire flows in strengthening tides
 TRADE, the calm health of nations !

180

Sire, I know
 Your smother courtiers please you best—nor measure
 Myself with them,—yet sometimes I would doubt
 If Statesmen rock'd and dandled into power
 Could leave such legacies to kings !

(*Louis appears irresolute.*)

BARADAS (*passing him, whispers*).

But Julie,

Shall I not summon her to Court ?

LOUIS (*motions to Baradas and turns haughtily to the Cardinal*).

Enough !

Your Eminence must excuse a longer audience.
 To your own palace :—For our conference, this
 Nor place—nor season.

190

RICHELIEU.

Good my liege, for *Justice*

All place a temple, and all season, summer !—
 Do you deny me justice ?—Saints of Heaven !
 He turns from me !—*Do you deny me justice ?*
 For fifteen years, while in these hands dwelt Empire,
 The humblest craftsman—the obscurest vassal—
 The very leper shrinking from the sun,
 Tho' loathed by Charity, might ask for justice !—
 Not with the fawning tone and crawling mien
 Of some I see around you—Counts and Princes—
 Kneeling for *favours* ;—but, erect and loud,
 As men who ask man's rights !—my liege, my Louis,
 Do you refuse me justice—audience even—
 In the pale presence of the baffled Murther ?*

200

* For the haughty and rebuking tone which Richelieu assumed in his expostulations with the King, see his *Memoirs* (passim) in Petitot's collection, vols. 22—30 (*bis*). Montesquieu, in one of his brilliant antitheses, says well of Richelieu, "Il avila le roi, mais il illustra le règne."

LOUIS.

Lord Cardinal—one by one you have sever'd from me
 The bonds of human love. All near and dear
 Mark'd out for vengeance—exile or the scaffold.
 You find me now amidst my trustiest friends,
 My closest kindred ;—you would tear them from me ;
 They murder *you* forsooth, since *me* they love. 210
 End of plots and treasons for one reign !
 Home !—Home ! and sleep away these phantoms !

RICHELIEU.

Sire !

I—patience, Heaven !—sweet Heaven !—Sire, from the foot
 Of that Great Throne, these hands have raised aloft
 On an Olympus, looking down on mortals
 And worshipp'd by their awe—before the foot
 Of that high throne,—spurn you the grey-hair'd man,
 Who gave you empire—and now sues for safety ?

LOUIS.

No :—when we see your Eminence in truth
 At the *foot* of the throne—we'll listen to you. 220
 [Exit Louis.

ORLEANS.

Saved !

BARADAS.

For this deep thanks to Julie and to Mauprat !

RICHELIEU.

My Lord de Baradas—I pray your pardon—
 You are to be my successor !—your hand, sir !

BARADAS (*aside*).

What can this mean ?—

RICHELIEU.

It trembles, see ! it trembles !
 The hand that holds the destinies of nations
 Ought to shake less !—poor Baradas !—poor France !

BARADAS.

Insolent—

[Exeunt Baradas and Orleans.

SCENE IV.

RICHELIEU.

Joseph—Did you hear the king?

JOSEPH.

I did—there's danger! Had you been less haughty*——

RICHELIEU.

And suffer'd slaves to chuckle—"see the Cardinal—
 How meek his Eminence is to-day"—I tell thee 230
 This is a strife in which the loftiest look
 Is the most subtle armour——

JOSEPH.

But——

RICHELIEU.

No time
 For ifs and buts. I will accuse these traitors!
 François shall witness that De Baradas
 Gave him the secret missive for De Bouillon,
 And told him life and death were in the scroll.
 I will—I will——

JOSEPH.

Tush! François is your creature;
 So they will say, and laugh at you!—*your witness*
Must be that same Despatch.

RICHELIEU.

Away to Marion!

JOSEPH.

I have been there—she is seized—removed—imprison'd— 240
 By the Count's orders.

* However "*orgueilleux*" and "*colère*" in his disputes with Louis, the Cardinal did not always disdain recourse to the arts of the courtier;—once, after an angry discussion with the king, in which, as usual, Richelieu got the better, Louis, as they quitted the palace together, said, rudely, "*Sortez le premier; vous êtes bien le roi de France.*" "*Si je passe le premier,*" replied the minister, after a moment's hesitation, and with great adroitness, "*ce ne peut être que comme le plus humble de vos serviteurs;*" and he took a flambeau from one of the pages, to light the king as he walked before him—"en reculant et sans tourner le dos."

RICHELIEU.

Goddess of bright dreams,
My Country—shalt thou lose me now, when most
Thou need'st thy worshipper? My native land!
Let me but ward this dagger from thy heart,
And die—but on thy bosom!

Enter JULIE.

JULIE.

Heaven! I thank thee!
I cannot be, or this all-powerful man
Would not stand idly thus.

RICHELIEU.

What dost *thou* here?

Home!

JULIE.

Home!—is *Adrien there?*—you're dumb—yet strive
For words; I see them trembling on your lip, 250
But choked by pity. It *was* truth—all truth!
Seized—the Bastile—and in your presence too!
Cardinal, where is Adrien? Think—he saved
Your life:—your name is infamy, if wrong
Should come to his!

RICHELIEU.

Be sooth'd, child.

JULIE.

Child no more;
I love, and I am woman! Hope and suffer—
Love, suffering, hope,—what else doth make the strength
And majesty of woman?—Where is Adrien?

RICHELIEU *to* JOSEPH.

Your youth was never young—you never loved:— 260
Speak to her—

JOSEPH.

Nay, take heed—the king's command,
'Tis true—I mean—the—

JULIE *to* RICHELIEU.

Let thine eyes meet mine;
Answer me but one word—I am a wife—
I ask thee for my *home*—my FATE—my ALL!
Where is my *husband*?

RICHELIEU.

You are Richelieu's ward,
 A soldier's bride: they who insist on truth
 Must out-face fear;—you ask me for your husband?
There—where the clouds of heaven look darkest, o'er
 The domes of the Bastile!

JULIE.

I thank you, father,
 You see I do not shudder. Heaven forgive you 270
 The sin of this desertion!

RICHELIEU (*detaining her*).

Whither wouldst thou?

JULIE.

Stay me not. Fie! I should be there already.
 I am thy ward, and haply he may think
 Thou'st taught *me* also to forsake the wretched!

RICHELIEU.

I've fill'd those cells—with many—traitors all.
 Had *they* wives too?—Thy memories, Power, are solemn!
 Poor sufferer!—think'st thou that yon gates of woe
 Unbar to love? Alas! if love once enter,
 'Tis for the last farewell; between those walls
 And the mute grave*—the blessed household sounds 280
 Only heard once—while, hungering at the door,
 The headsman whets the axe.

JULIE.

O, mercy! mercy!
 Save him, restore him, father! Art thou not
 The Cardinal-King?—the Lord of life and death—
 Beneath whose light, as deeps beneath the moon,
 The solemn tides of Empire ebb and flow?—
 Art thou not Richelieu?

RICHELIEU.

Yesterday I was!—
 To-day, a very weak old man!—To-morrow,
 I know not what!

JULIE.

Do you conceive his meaning?
 Alas! I cannot. But, methinks, my senses 290
 Are duller than they were!

* Selon l'usage de Louis XIII., faire arrêter quelqu'un pour crime d'état, et le faire mourir, l'était à peu près le même chose.—*Le Clerc*.

JOSEPH.

The King is chafed
Against his servant. Lady, while we speak,
The lackey of the ante-room is not
More powerless than the Minister of France.

RICHELIEU.

And yet the air is still ; Heaven wears no cloud ;*
From Nature's silent orbit starts no portent
To warn the unconscious world ;—albeit, this night
May with a morrow teem which, in my fall,
Would carry earthquake to remotest lands,
And change the Christian globe. What would'st thou, woman ?
Thy fate and his, with mine, for good or ill, [300
Are woven threads. In my vast sum of life
Millions such units merge.

Enter First Courtier.

FIRST COURTIER.

Madame de Mauprat !
Pardon, your Eminence—even now I seek
This lady's home—commanded by the King
To pray her presence.

JULIE (*clinging to Richelieu*).

Think of my dead father !—
Think, how, an infant, clinging to your knees,
And looking to your eyes, the wrinkled care
Fled from your brow before the smile of childhood,
Fresh from the dews of heaven ! Think of this, 310
And take me to your breast.

RICHELIEU.

To those who sent you !—
And say you found the virtue they would slay
Here—couch'd upon this heart, as at an altar,
And shelter'd by the wings of sacred Rome !
Begone !

FIRST COURTIER.

My Lord, I am your friend and servant—
Misjudge me not ; but never yet was Louis
So roused against you :—shall I take this answer ?—
It were to be your foe.

* Omitted in representation from line 295 to 302.

RICHELIEU.

All time my foe,
If I, a Priest, could cast this holy Sorrow
Forth from her last asylum !

FIRST COURTIER.

He is lost !

320

(Exit First Courtier.)

RICHELIEU.

God help thee, child !—she hears not ! Look upon her !
The storm, that rends the oak, uproots the flower.
Her father loved me so ! and in that age
When friends are brothers ! She has been to me
Soother, nurse, plaything, daughter. Are these tears ?*
Oh ! shame, shame !—dotage !

JOSEPH.

Tears are not for eyes
That rather need the lightning, which can pierce
Through barred gates and triple walls, to smite
Crime, where it cowers in secret !—The Despatch !
Set every spy to work ;—the morrow's sun
Must see that written treason in your hands,
Or rise upon your ruin.

330

RICHELIEU.

Ay—and close

Upon my corpse !—I am not made to live—
Friends, glory, France, all reft from me ;—my star
Like some vain holiday mimicry of fire,
Piercing imperial heaven, and falling down
Rayless and blacken'd, to the dust—a thing
For all men's feet to trample ! Yea !—to-morrow
Triumph or death ! Look up, child !—Lead us, Joseph.

As they are going out, enter Baradas and De Beringhen.

BARADAS.

My Lord, the King cannot believe your Eminence
So far forgets your duty, and his greatness,

340

* Like Cromwell and Rienzi, Richelieu appears to have been easily moved to tears. The Queen Mother, who put the hardest interpretation on that humane weakness, which is natural with very excitable temperaments, said that "Il pleurait quand il voulait." I may add, to those who may be inclined to imagine that Richelieu appears in parts of this scene too dejected for consistency with so imperious a character, that it is recorded of him that "quand ses affaires ne reussissoient pas, il se trouvoit abattu et epouvanté, et quand il obtenoit ce qu'il souhaitoit, il étoit fier et insultant."

As to resist his mandate ! Pray you, Madam,
Obey the King—no cause for fear ! *

JULIE.

My father !

RICHELIEU.

She shall not stir !

BARADAS.

You are not of her kindred—

An orphan—

RICHELIEU.

And her country is her mother !

BARADAS.

The country is the King !

RICHELIEU.

Ay, is it so ;—

Then wakes the power which in the age of iron
Burst forth to curb the great, and raise the low.
Mark, where she stands !—around her form I draw
The awful circle of our solemn church !
Set but a foot within that holy ground,
And on thy head—yea, though it wore a crown—
I launch the curse of Rome !

359

BARADAS.

I dare not brave you !

I do but speak the orders of my King.
The church, your rank, power, very word, my Lord,
Suffice you for resistance :—blame yourself,
If it should cost you power !

RICHELIEU.

That *my* stake.—Ah !

Dark gamester ! *what is thine ?* Look to it well !—
Lose not a trick.—By this same hour to-morrow
Thou shalt have France, or I thy head !

BARADAS (*aside to De Beringhen*).

He cannot

360

Have the despatch ?

DE BERINGHEN.

No : were it so, your stake

Were lost already.

JOSEPH (*aside*).

Patience is your game :
Reflect you have not the Despatch !

RICHELIEU.

O ! monk !

Leave patience to the saints—for *I* am human !
Did not thy father die for France, poor orphan ?
And now they say thou hast *no* father !—Fie !
Art thou not pure and good ?—if so, thou art
A part of that—the Beautiful, the Sacred—
Which in all climes, men that have hearts adore,
By the great title of their mother country !

370

BARADAS (*aside*).

He wanders !

RICHELIEU.

So cling close unto my breast,
Here where thou droop'st—lies France ! I am very feeble—
Of little use it seems to either now.
Well, well—we will go home.

BARADAS.

In sooth, my Lord,
You do need rest—the burthens of the state
O'ertask your health !

RICHELIEU (*to Joseph*).

I'm patient, see !

BARADAS (*aside*).

His mind

And life are breaking fast !

RICHELIEU (*overhearing him*).

Irreverent ribbald !

If so, beware the falling ruins ! Hark !
I tell thee, scorner of these whitening hairs,
When this snow melteth there shall come a flood !
Avaunt ! my name is Richelieu—I defy thee !
Walk blindfold on ; behind thee stalks the headsman.
Ha ! ha !—how pale he is ! Heaven save my country !

380

[*Falls back in Joseph's arms.*

(*Baradas exit, followed by De Beringhen, betraying his
exultation by his gestures.*)

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

Fourth Day.

SCENE I.

The Bastile—a corridor—in the back-ground the door of one of the condemned cells.

Enter Joseph and Gaoler.

GAOLER.

Stay, father, I will call the governor.

[*Exit Gaoler.*]

JOSEPH.

He has it, then—this Huguet ;—so we learn
From François ;—Humph ! Now if I can but gain
One moment's access, all is ours ! The Cardinal
Trembles 'tween life and death. His life is power :—
Smite one—slay both ! No Æsculapian drugs,
By learned quacks baptised with Latin jargon,
E'er bore the healing which that scrap of parchment
Will medicine to Ambition's flagging heart.
France shall be saved—and Joseph be a bishop !

10

Enter Governor and Joseph.

GOVERNOR.

Father, you wish to see the prisoners Huguet
And the young knight De Mauprat ?

JOSEPH.

So my office,
And the Lord Cardinal's order warrant, son !

GOVERNOR.

Father, it cannot be : Count Baradas
Has summon'd to the Louvre Sieur De Mauprat.

JOSEPH.

Well, well ! But Huguet—

GOVERNOR.

Dies at noon.

JOSEPH.

At noon!

No moment to delay the pious rites
Which fit the soul for death—quick, quick—admit me!

GOVERNOR.

You cannot enter, monk! Such are my orders!

JOSEPH.

Orders! vain main!—the Cardinal still is minister. 20
His orders crush all others!

GOVERNOR (*lifting his hat*).

Save his king's!

See, monk, the royal sign and seal affix'd
To the count's mandate. None may have access
To either prisoner, Huguet or De Mauprat,
Not even a priest, without the special passport
Of Count de Baradas. I'll hear no more!

JOSEPH.

Just Heaven! and are we baffled thus!—Despair!!
Think on the Cardinal's power—beware his anger.

GOVERNOR.

I'll not be menaced, Priest! Besides, the Cardinal
Is dying and disgraced—all Paris knows it. 30
You hear the prisoner's knell. [*Bell tolls.*]

JOSEPH.

I do beseech you—

The Cardinal is *not* dying—But one moment
And—hist!—five thousand pistoles!—

GOVERNOR.

How! a bribe

And to a soldier, grey with years of honour!
Begone!—

JOSEPH.

Ten thousand—twenty!—

GOVERNOR.

Gaoler—put

This monk without our walls.

JOSEPH.

By those grey hairs,
 Yea, by this badge (*touching the cross of St. Louis worn by
 the Governor*)—
 the guerdon of your valour—
 By all your toils—hard days and sleepless nights—
 Borne in your country's service, noble son—
 Let me but see the prisoner!—

GOVERNOR.

No!—

40

JOSEPH.

 He hath
 Secrets of state—papers in which—

GOVERNOR (*interrupting*).

I know—

Such was his message to Count Baradas,
 Doubtless the Count will see to it—

JOSEPH.

 The Count!
 Then not a hope!—You shall—

GOVERNOR.

 Betray my trust!
 Never—not one word more—you heard me, gaoler!

JOSEPH.

What can be done?—distraction!—Richelieu yet
 Must—what?—I know not—thought, nerve, strength, forsake
 me.
 Dare you refuse the Church her holiest rights?

GOVERNOR.

I refuse nothing—I obey my orders—

50

JOSEPH.

And sell your country to her parricides!
 Oh, tremble yet!—Richelieu—

GOVERNOR.

Begone!

JOSEPH.

Undone!

(*Exit Joseph.*)

GOVERNOR.

A most audacious shaveling—interdicted
Above all others by the Count—

GAOLER.

I hope, Sir,
I shall not lose my perquisites. The Sieur
De Mauprat will not be reprieved?

GOVERNOR.

Oh, fear not :
The Count's commands by him who came for Mauprat
Are to prepare headsman and axe by noon ;
The Count will give you perquisites enough ;
Two deaths in one day !

GAOLER.

Sir, may Heaven reward him ! 60
Oh, by the way, that troublesome young fellow,
Who calls himself the prisoner Huguet's son,
Is here again—implores, weeps, raves, to see him.

GOVERNOR.

Poor youth, I pity him !

Enter De Beringhen, followed by François.

DE BERINGHEN (to François).

Now, prithee, friend,
Let go my cloak ; you really discompose me.

FRANÇOIS.

No, they will drive me hence : my father ! Oh !
Let me but see him once—but once—one moment !

DE BERINGHEN (to Governor).

Your servant, Messire,—this poor rascal, Huguet,
Has sent to see the Count de Baradas
Upon state secrets, that afflict his conscience.
The Count can't leave his Majesty an instant :
I am his proxy.

70

GOVERNOR.

The Count's word is law !
Again, young scapegrace ! How com'st thou admitted ?

DE BERINGHEN.

Oh ! a most filial fellow : Huguet's son !

I found him whimpering in the court below.
 I pray his leave to say good bye to father,
 Before that very long unpleasant journey
 Father's about to take. Let him wait here
 Till I return.

FRANCOIS.

No ; take me with you.

DE BERINGHEN.

Nay ;

After *me*, friend—the Public first !

GOVERNOR.

The Count's

80

Commands are strict. No one must visit Huguet
 Without his passport.

DE BERINGHEN.

Here it is ! Pshaw ! nonsense !

I'll be your surety. See, my Cerberus,
 He is no Hercules !

GOVERNOR.

Well, you're responsible.

Stand there, friend. If, when you come out, my Lord,
 The youth slip in, 'tis *your* fault.

DE BERINGHEN.

So it is !

[Exit through the door of the cell, followed by the Gaoler.]

GOVERNOR.

Be calm, my lad. Don't fret so. I had once
 A father too ! I'll not be hard upon you,
 And so stand close. I must not *see* you enter :
 You understand. Between this innocent youth
 And that intriguing monk there is, in truth,
 A wide distinction.

90

Re-enter GAOLER.

Come, we'll go our rounds ;

I'll give you just one quarter of an hour ;
 And if my Lord leave first, make my excuse.
 Yet stay, the gallery's long and dark ; no sentry
 Until he reach the grate below. He'd best
 Wait till I come. If he should lose the way,
 We may not be in call.

FRANCOIS.

I'll tell him, Sir,—

[*Exeunt Governor and Gaoler.*

He's a wise son that knoweth his own father.

I've forged a precious one! So far, so well!

100

Alas, what then? this wretch has sent to Baradas—

Will sell the scroll to ransom life. Oh, Heaven!

On what a thread hangs hope!

[*Listens at the door.*

Loud words—a cry!

[*Looks through the key-hole.*

They struggle! Ho!—the packet!!!

[*Tries to open the door.*

Lost! He has it—

The courtier has it—Huguet, spite his chains,

Grapples!—well done! Now—now!

[*Draws back.*

The gallery's long!

And this is left us!

[*Drawing his dagger, and standing behind the door.*

Re-enter De Beringhen, with the packet.

Victory!

Yield it, robber—

Yield it—or die—

[*A short struggle.*

DE BERINGHEN.

Off! ho!—there!—

FRANCOIS (*grappling with him*).

Death or honour!—

[*Exeunt struggling.*

SCENE II.

The King's closet at the Louvre. A suite of rooms in perspective at one side.

Baradas—Orleans.

BARADAS.

All smiles! the Cardinal's swoon of yesterday

Heralds his death to-day;—could he survive,

110

It would not be as minister—so great
 The king's resentment at the priest's defiance !
All smiles !—and yet, should this accurs'd De Mauprat
 Have given our packet to another—'Sdeath !
 I dare not think of it !

ORLEANS.

You've sent to search him ?

BARADAS.

Sent, Sir, to search ?—that hireling hands may find
 Upon him, naked, with its broken seal,
 That scroll, whose every word is death ! No—no—
 These hands alone must clutch that awful secret.
 I dare not leave the palace, night or day, 120
 While Richelieu lives—his minions—creatures—spies—
 Not one must reach the king !

ORLEANS.

What hast thou done ?

BARADAS.

Summon'd De Mauprat hither ?

ORLEANS.

Could this Huguet,
 Who pray'd thy presence with so fierce a fervour,
 Have thieved the scroll ?

BARADAS.

Huguet was housed with us,
 The very moment we dismiss'd the courier.
 It cannot be ! a stale trick for reprieve.
 But, to make sure, I've sent our trustiest friend
 To see and sift him.—Hist ! here comes the King—
 How fare you, Sire ?

Enter Louis.

LOUIS.

In the same mind I have 130
 Decided ! yes, he would forbid your presence,
 My brother,—your's, my friend,—then Julie, too ;
 Thwarts—braves—defies—(*suddenly turning to Baradas*) We
 make you minister.
 Gaston, for you—the baton of our armies.
 You love me, do you not ?

ORLEANS.

Oh, love you, Sire?

(aside.)—Never so much as now.

BARADAS.

May I deserve

Your trust *(aside)*—until you sign your abdication !

My liege, but one way left to daunt De Mauprat,

And Julie to divorce.—We must prepare

The death-writ ; what, tho' sign'd and seal'd ? we can 140

Withhold the enforcement.

LOUIS.

Ah, you may prepare it ;

We need not urge it to effect.

BARADAS.

Exactly !

No haste, my liege *(looking at his watch, and aside)*. He
may live one hour longer.*(Enter Courtier)*.

COURTIER.

The Lady Julie, Sire, implores an audience.

LOUIS.

Aha ! repentant of her folly !—Well,
Admit her.

BARADAS.

Sire, she comes for Mauprat's pardon,

And the conditions——

LOUIS.

You are minister,

We leave to you our answer.

*(As Julie enters,—the Captain of the Archers, by another
door,—and whispers Baradas).*

CAPTAIN.

The Chevalier

De Mauprat waits below.

BARADAS *(aside)*.Now the despatch ! *[Exit with Officer.*

H

Enter Julie.

JULIE

My liege, you sent for me. I come where Grief 150
Should come when guiltless, while the name of King
 Is holy on the earth!—Here, at the feet
 Of Power, I kneel for mercy.

LOUIS.

Mercy, Julie,
 Is an affair of state. The Cardinal should
 In this be your interpreter.

JULIE.

Alas!

I know not if that mighty spirit now
 Stoop to the things of earth. Nay, while I speak,
 Perchance he hears the orphan by the throne
 Where Kings themselves need pardon; O my liege,
 Be father to the fatherless; in you 160
 Dwells my last hope!

Enter Baradas.

BARADAS (*aside*).

He has not the despatch;
 Smiled, while we search'd, and braves me.—Oh!

LOUIS (*gently*).

What would'st thou?

JULIE.

A single life.—You reign o'er millions.—What
 Is *one man's* life to you?—and yet to *me*
 'Tis France—'tis earth—'tis everything!—a life—
 A human life—my husband's.

LOUIS (*aside*).

Speak to her,
 I am not marble,—give her hope—or—

BARADAS.

Madam,
 Vex not your King, whose heart, too soft for justice,
 Leaves to his ministers that solemn charge.

[*Louis walks up the stage.*]

JULIE.

You *were* his friend.

BARADAS.

I *was* before I loved thee.

170

JULIE.

Loved me !

BARADAS.

Hush, Julie : could'st thou misinterpret
My acts, thoughts, motives, nay, my very words,
Here—in this palace ?

JULIE.

Now I know I'm mad,
Even that memory fail'd me.

BARADAS.

I am young,
Well-born and brave as Mauprat :—for thy sake
I peril what he has not—fortune—power ;
All to great souls most dazzling. I alone
Can save thee from yon tyrant, now my puppet !
Be mine ; annul the mockery of this marriage,
And on the day I clasp thee to my breast
De Mauprat shall be free.

180

JULIE.

Thou durst not speak
Thus in *his* ear (*pointing to Louis*). Thou double traitor !—
tremble.
I will unmask thee.

BARADAS.

I will say thou ravest.
And see this scroll ! its letters shall be blood !
Go to the King, count with me word for word ;
And while you pray the life—I write the sentence !

JULIE.

Stay, stay (*rushing to the King*). You have a kind and
princely heart,
Tho' sometimes it is silent : you were born
To *power*—it has not flush'd you into madness,
As it doth meaner men. Banish my husband—
Dissolve our marriage—cast me to that grave
Of human ties, where hearts congeal to ice,
In the dark convent's everlasting winter—
(Surely eno' for justice—hate—revenge)—

190

But spare this life, thus lonely, scathed, and bloomless ;
 And when thou stand'st for judgment on thine own,
 The deed shall shine beside thee as an angel :

LOUIS (*much affected*).

Go, go, to Baradas : annul thy marriage,
 And——

JULIE (*anxiously, and watching his countenance*).

Be his bride !

LOUIS.

A form, a mere decorum,
 Thou know'st I love thee.

JULIE.

O thou sea of shame,

200

And not one star.

(*The King goes up the stage, and passes through the suite of
 rooms at the side in evident emotion.*)

BARADAS.

Well, thy election, Julie ;
 This hand—his grave !

JULIE.

His grave ! and I—

BARADAS.

Can save him.—

Swear to be mine.

JULIE.

That were a bitterer death !
 Avaunt, thou tempter ! I did ask his life
 A boon, and not the barter of dishonour.
 The heart can break, and scorn you : wreak your malice ;
 Adrien and I will leave you this sad earth,
 And pass together hand in hand to Heaven !

BARADAS.

You have decided.

[*Withdraws to the side scene for a moment, and returns.*]

Listen to me, Lady ;
 I am no base intriguer. I adored thee 210
 From the first glance of those inspiring eyes ;
 With thee entwined ambition, hope, the future.
 I will not lose thee ! I can place thee nearest—

Ay, to the throne—nay, on the throne, perchance ;
My star is at its zenith. Look upon me ;
Hast thou decided ?

JULIE.

No, no ; you can see
How weak I am : be human, Sir—one moment.

BARADAS (*stamping his foot, De Mauprat appears at the
side of the stage, guarded*).

Behold thy husband !—Shall he pass to death,
And know thou could'st have saved him ?

JULIE.

Adrien, speak !

But say you wish to *live* !—if not your wife, 220
Your slave,—do with me as you will ?

DE MAUPRAT.

Once more !—

Why this is mercy, Count ! Oh, think, my Julie,
Life, at the best, is short,—but love immortal !

BARADAS (*taking Julie's hand*).

Ah, loveliest—

JULIE.

Go, that touch has made me iron.
We have decided—death !

BARADAS (*to De Mauprat*).

Now, say to whom
Thou gavest the packet, and thou yet shalt live.

DE MAUPRAT.

I'll tell thee nothing !

BARADAS.

Hark,—the rack !

DE MAUPRAT.

Thy penance
For ever, wretch !—What rack is like the conscience ?

JULIE.

I shall be with thee soon.

BARADAS (*giving the writ to the Officer*).

Hence, to the headsman.

The doors are thrown open. The Huissier announces "His Eminence the Cardinal Duke de Richelieu."

Enter Richelieu, attended by Gentlemen, Pages, &c., pale, feeble, and leaning on Joseph, followed by three Secretaries of State, attended by Sub-secretaries with papers, &c.

JULIE (*rushing to Richelieu*).

You live—you live—and Adrien shall not die ! 230

RICHELIEU.

Not if an old man's prayers, himself near death,
Can aught avail thee, daughter ! Count, you now
Hold what I held on earth :—one boon, my Lord,
This soldier's life.

BARADAS.

The stake,—my head !—you said it.
I cannot lose one trick.—Remove your prisoner.

JULIE.

No !—No !—

Enter Louis from the rooms beyond.

RICHELIEU (*to Officer*).

Stay, Sir, one moment. My good liege,
Your worn-out servant, willing, Sire, to spare you
Some pain of conscience, would forestall your wishes.
I do resign my office.

DE MAUPRAT.

You !

JULIE.

All's over !

RICHELIEU.

My end draws near. These sad ones, Sire, I love them, 240
I do not ask his life ; but suffer justice
To halt, until I can dismiss his soul,
Charged with an old man's blessing.

LOUIS.

Surely !

BARADAS.

Sire——

LOUIS.

Silence—small favour to a dying servant.

RICHELIEU.

You would consign your armies to the baton
Of your most honour'd brother. Sire, so be it !
Your minister, the Count de Baradas ;
A most sagacious choice !—Your Secretaries
Of State attend me, Sire, to render up
The ledgers of a realm.—I do beseech you, 250
Suffer these noble gentlemen to learn
The nature of the glorious task that waits them,
Here, in my presence.

LOUIS.

You say well, my Lord.

(To Secretaries, as he seats himself.)

Approach, Sirs.

RICHELIEU.

I—I—faint !—air—air—

*(Joseph and a gentleman assist him to a sofa, placed beneath
a window.)*

I thank you—

Draw near, my children.

BARADAS.

He's too weak to question,

Nay, scarce to speak ; all's safe.

SCENE III.

Manent Richelieu, Mauprat, and Julie, the last kneeling beside the Cardinal ; the Officer of the Guard behind Mauprat. Joseph near Richelieu, watching the King. Louis. Baradas at the back of the King's chair, anxious and disturbed. Orleans at a greater distance, careless and triumphant. The Secretaries. As each Secretary advances in his turn, he takes the portfolios from the Sub-secretaries.

FIRST SECRETARY.

The affairs of Portugal,
Most urgent, Sire ;—One short month since the Duke
Braganza was a rebel.

LOUIS.

And is still !

FIRST SECRETARY.

No, Sire, *he has succeeded !* He is now
Crown'd King of Portugal—craves instant succour
Against the arms of Spain.

260

LOUIS.

We will not grant it

Against his lawful king. Eh, Count ?

BARADAS.

No, Sire.

FIRST SECRETARY.

But Spain's your deadliest foe : whatever
Can weaken Spain must strengthen France. The Cardinal
*Would send the succours :—(solemnly)—*balance, Sire, of
Europe !

LOUIS.

The Cardinal !—balance !—We'll consider.—Eh, Count ?

BARADAS.

Yes, Sire ;—fall back.

FIRST SECRETARY.

But——

BARADAS.

Oh ! fall back, Sir.

JOSEPH.

Humph

SECOND SECRETARY.

The affairs of England, Sire, most urgent : Charles
The First has lost a battle that decides
One half his realm,—craves moneys, Sire, and succour. 270

LOUIS.

He shall have both.—Eh, Baradas ?

BARADAS.

Yes, Sire.

(Oh that despatch !—my veins are fire !)

RICHELIEU (*feebly, but with great distinctness.*)

My liege—
 Forgive me—Charles's cause is lost! A man,
 Named Cromwell, risen—a great man!—your succour
 Would fail—your loans be squander'd!—Pause—reflect.*

LOUIS.

Reflect.—Eh, Baradas?

BARADAS.

Reflect, Sire.

JOSEPH.

Humph!

LOUIS (*aside*).

I half repent!—No successor to Richelieu!—
 Round me thrones totter!—dynasties dissolve!—
 The soil he guards alone escapes the earthquake!

JOSEPH.

Our star not yet eclipsed!—you mark the King? 280
 Oh! had we the despatch!

RICHELIEU,

Ah! Joseph!—Child—

Would I could help thee!

Enter Gentleman, whispers Joseph, who exit hastily.

BARADAS (*to Secretary*).

Sir, fall back.

SECOND SECRETARY.

But——

BARADAS.

Pshaw, Sir!

THIRD SECRETARY (*mysteriously*).

The *secret correspondence*, Sire, most urgent,—
 Accounts of spies—deserters—heretics—
 Assassins—poisoners—schemes against yourself!——

LOUIS.

Myself!—most urgent!—(*looking on the documents.*)

* See in "Cinq Mars," vol. v., the striking and brilliant chapter from which the interlude of the Secretaries is borrowed.

Re-enter Joseph with François, whose pourpoint is streaked with blood. François passes behind the Cardinal's attendants, and, sheltered by them from the sight of Baradas, &c., falls at Richelieu's feet.

FRANÇOIS.

O ! my Lord !

RICHELIEU.

Thou art bleeding !

FRANÇOIS.

A scratch—I have not fail'd !——(*gives the packet.*)

RICHELIEU.

Hush !——(*looking at the contents.*)

THIRD SECRETARY (*to King*).

Sire, the Spaniards

Have reinforced their army on the frontiers.

The Duc de Bouillon——

RICHELIEU.

Hold !—In this department—

A paper—here, Sire,—read yourself—then take

290

The Count's advice in't.

Enter De Beringhen hastily, and draws aside Baradas.

(*Richelieu, to Secretary, giving an open parchment.*)

BARADAS (*bursting from De Beringhen*).

What ! and reft it from thee !

Ha !—hold !

JOSEPH.

Fall back, son,—it is your turn now !

BARADAS.

Death !—the Despatch !

LOUIS (*reading*).

To Bouillon—and sign'd Orleans !—

Baradas, too !—league with our foes of Spain !—

Lead our Italian armies—what ! to Paris !—

Capture the King—my health require repose—

Make me subscribe my proper abdication—
Orleans, my brother, Regent!—Saints of Heaven!
These are the men I loved!

*(Baradas draws,—attempts to rush out,—is arrested.
Orleans, endeavouring to escape more quickly, meets
Josephs eye, and stops short.)*

(Richelieu falls back.)

JOSEPH.

See to the Cardinal! 300

BARADAS.

He's dying!—and I yet shall dupe the King!

LOUIS *(rushing to Richelieu)*.

Richelieu!—Lord Cardinal!—'tis I resign!—
Reign thou!

JOSEPH.

Alas! too late!—he faints!

LOUIS.

Reign, Richelieu!

RICHELIEU *(feebly)*.

With absolute power?—

LOUIS.

Most absolute!—Oh! live!—

If not for me—for France!

RICHELIEU.

FRANCE!

LOUIS.

Oh! this treason!—

The army—Orleans—Bouillon—Heavens!—the Spaniard!—
Where will they be next week?—

RICHELIEU *(starting up)*.

There,—at my feet!

(To First and Second Secretary.)

Ere the clock strike!—The Envoys have their answer!

(To Third Secretary, with a ring.)

This to De Chavigny—he knows the rest—

No need of parchment here—he must not halt
 For sleep—for food.—In *my* name,—MINE!—he will 310
 Arrest the Duc de Bouillon at the head
 Of his army!—Ho! there, Count de Baradas
 Thou hast lost the stake!—Away with him!*

(*As the Guards open the folding-doors, a view of the ante-room
 beyond, lined with Courtiers. Baradas passes through
 the line.*)

Ha!—ha!—

(*Snatching De Mauprat's death-warrant from the officer.*)

See here De Mauprat's death-writ, Julie!—
 Parchment for battledores!—Embrace your husband!—
 At last the old man blesses you!

JULIE.

O joy!

You are saved; you live—I hold you in these arms.

MAUPRAT.

Never to part—

JULIE.

No—never, Adrien—never!

LOUIS (*peevishly*).

One moment makes a startling cure, Lord Cardinal; † 320

RICHELIEU.

Ay, Sire, for in one moment there did pass
 Into this wither'd frame the might of France!—
 My own dear France—I have thee yet—I have saved thee!
 I clasp thee still!—it was thy voice that call'd me
 Back from the tomb!—What mistress like our country?

* The passion of the drama requires this catastrophe for Baradas. He, however, survived his disgrace,—though stripped of all his rapidly-acquired fortunes—and the daring that belonged to his character won him distinction in foreign service. He returned to France after Richelieu's death, but never regained the same court influence. He had taken the vows of a knight of Malta, and Louis made him a Prior!

† The sudden resuscitation of Richelieu (not to strain too much on the real passion which supports him in this scene) is in conformance with the more dissimulating part of his character. The extraordinary mobility of his countenance (latterly so deathlike, save when the mind spoke in the features) always lent itself to stage effect of this nature. The queen mother said of him, that she had seen him one moment so feeble, cast down, and "semi-mort;" that he seemed on the point of giving up the ghost—and the next moment he would start up full of animation, energy, and life.

LOUIS.

For Mauprat's pardon—well! But Julie,—Richelieu,
Leave me one thing to love!—

RICHELIEU.

A subject's luxury!
Yet, if you must love something, Sire,—*love me!*

LOUIS (*smiling in spite of himself*).

Fair proxy for a young fresh Demoiselle!

RICHELIEU.

Your heart speaks for my clients:—Kneel, my children, 330
And thank your King—

JULIE.

Ah, tears like these, my liege,
Are dews that mount to Heaven.

LOUIS.

Rise—rise—be happy.

(*Richelieu beckons to De Beringhen.*)

DE BERINGHEN (*falteringly*).

My Lord—you are—most—happily—recover'd.

RICHELIEU.

But you are pale, dear Beringhen:—this air
Suits not your delicate frame—I long have thought so:—
Sleep not another night in Paris:—Go,—
Or else your precious life may be in danger.
Leave France, dear Beringhen!

DE BERINGHEN.

I shall have time,
More than I ask'd for,—to discuss the pâté.

[*Exit De Beringhen.*]

RICHELIEU (*to Orleans*).

For you, repentance—absence—and confession! 340

(*To François.*)

Never say *fail* again.—Brave Boy!

(*To Joseph.*)

He'll be—

A Bishop first.

JOSEPH.

Ah, Cardinal—

RICHELIEU.

Ah, Joseph !

(To Louis—as De Mauprat and Julie converse apart).

See, my liege—see thro' plots and counterplots—
 Thro' gain and loss—thro' glory and disgrace—
 Along the plains, where passionate Discord rears
 Eternal Babel—still the holy stream
 Of human happiness glides on !

LOUIS.

And must we
 Thank for *that* also—our prime Minister ?

RICHELIEU.

No—let us own it :—there is ONE above
 Sways the harmonious mystery of the world
 Ev'n better than prime ministers ;—

350

Alas !

Our glories float between the earth and heaven
 Like clouds which seem pavilions of the sun,
 And are the playthings of the casual wind ;
 Still, like the cloud which drops on unseen crags
 The dews the wild flower feeds on, our ambition
 May from its airy height drop gladness down
 On unsuspected virtue ;—and the flower
 May bless the cloud when it hath pass'd away !*

THE END OF RICHELIEU.

* The image and the sentiment in the concluding lines are borrowed from a passage in one of the writings attributed to the Cardinal.

O D E S.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE ODES.

THE connexion between the Lyric and Dramatic forms of poetical composition is sufficiently ancient and established to warrant me, I trust, in subjoining to an Historical Play three attempts, equally elaborate, in the less cultivated art of the Historical Ode. Written at least, with the advantage of mature experience, I venture to express a hope that these Odes may, in some degree, redeem the faults of poems put forth, a few years since, in the rashness of early youth:— If I require an additional apology for associating them with the Drama of “Richelieu,” let me frankly acknowledge that I am not uninfluenced by the belief, that, should their more obtrusive companion meet with any success, they are likely to obtain a larger circle of readers, and therefore a fairer judgment, than, in the present indisposition to poetry, an author whose reputation, such as it may be, lies in other departments of literature, could reasonably expect for a volume exclusively devoted to lyrical compositions: and, on the other hand, if impartial judges should pass an unfavourable verdict on their pretensions, I have, at least, put them forward in a more unassuming shape than that of a separate publication.

London, March 5, 1839.

O D E I.

THE

LAST DAYS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

“ Her delight is to sit in the dark, and sometimes, with shedding tears, to bewail Essex.”—*Contemporaneous Correspondence*.

“ She refused all consolation ; few words she uttered, and they were all expressive of some hidden grief which she cared not to reveal. But sighs and groans were the chief vent which she gave to her despondency, and which tho’ they discovered her sorrows were never able to ease or assuage them. Ten days and nights she lay upon the carpet leaning on cushions which her maids brought her, &c.”—*Hume*.

I.

Rise from thy bloody grave
Thou soft Medusa of the Fated Line *
Whose evil beauty look’d to death the Brave ;—
Discrowned Queen, around whose passionate shame
Terror and Grief the palest flowers entwine,
That ever veil’d the ruins of a Name
With the sweet parasites of song divine !—
Arise, sad Ghost, arise,
And, if Revenge outlive the Tomb,
Thou art avenged—Behold the Doomer brought to Doom !

* Mary Stuart—“ The soft Medusa ” is an expression strikingly applied to her in her own day.

Lo, where thy mighty Murderess lies,
 The sleepless couch—the sunless room,
 And, quell'd the eagle eye and lion mien,
 The woe-worn shadow of the Titan Queen!

II.

There, sorrow-stricken, to the ground,
 Alike by night and day,
 The heart's-blood from the inward wound
 Ebbs silently away.
 And oft she turns from face to face
 A sharp and eager gaze,
 As if the Memory sought to trace
 The sign of some lost dwelling-place
 Belov'd in happier Days;—
 Ah, what the clue supplies
 In the cold vigil of a hireling's eyes?
 Ah, sad in childless age to weep alone,
 And start and gaze, to find no sorrow save our own!—
 O Soul, thou speedest to thy rest away,
 But *not* upon the pinions of the Dove;
 When Death draws nigh, how miserable they
 Who have outlived all Love!
 As on the solemn verge of Night
 Lingers a weary Moon,
 She wanes, the last of every glorious light
 That bath'd with splendour her majestic noon:—
 The stately stars that clustering o'er the isle
 Lull'd into glittering rest the subject sea;—
 Gone the great Masters of Italian wile
 False to the world beside, but true to thee!—
 Burleigh, the subtlest builder of thy fame,—

The gliding craft of winding Walsinghame ;—
 They who exalted yet before thee bowed ;—
 And that more dazzling chivalry—the Band
 That made thy Court a Faëry Land,
 In which thou wert enshrin'd to reign alone—
 The Gloriana of the Diamond Throne ;—
 All gone,—and left thee sad amidst the cloud !

III.

To their great Sires, to whom thy youth was known,
 Who from thy smile, as laurels from the Sun,
 Drank the immortal greenness of renown,
 Succeeds the cold lip-homage scanty won
 From the new race whose hearts already bear
 The Wise-man's offerings to the unworthy Heir.
 There, specious Bacon's * unimpassion'd brow,
 And crook-back Cecil's ever earthward eyes
 Watching the glass in which the sands run low ;—
 But deem not fondly there
 To weep the fate or pour the averting prayer
 Have come those solemn spies !
 Lo, at the Regal Gate
 The impatient Couriers wait ;
 To speed from hour to hour the nice account
 That registers the grudg'd unpitied sighs
 Which yet must joy delay, before
 The Stuart's tottering step shall mount
 The last great Tudor's throne, red with his Mother's gore !

* See the servile and heart-sickening correspondence maintained by Francis Bacon and Robert Cecil (the sons of Elizabeth's most faithful friends) with the Scottish Court, during the Queen's last illness.

IV.

O piteous mockery of all pomp thou art,
 Poor Child of Clay, worn out with toil and years!

As, layer by layer, the granite of the heart
 Dissolving, melteth to the weakest tears
 That ever Village Maiden shed above
 The grave that robb'd her quiet world of love.

Ten days and nights upon that floor

Those weary limbs have lain ;

And every hour but added more

Of heaviness to pain.

As gazing into dismal air

She sees the headless phantom there,

The victim round whose image twined

The last wild love of woman-kind ;

That love which in its dire excess

Will blast where it can fail to bless,

And, like the lightning, flash, and fade

In gloom along the ruins it has made.

'Twere sad to see from those stern eyes

The' unheeded anguish feebly flow ;

And hear the broken word that dies

In moanings faint and low ;—

But sadder still to mark the while,

The vacant stare—the marble smile,

And think, that goal of glory won,

How slight a shade between

The idiot moping in the sun

And England's Giant Queen !*

* " It was after labouring for nearly three weeks under a morbid melancholy, which brought on a stupor not unmixed with some indications of a disordered

V.

Call back the gorgeous Past !
 Lo, England white-robed for a holyday !
 While, choral to the clarion's kingly blast,
 Peals shout on shout along the Virgin's way,
 As thro' the swarming streets rolls on the long array.
 Mary is dead !—Look from your fire-won homes,
 Exulting Martyrs !—on the mount shall rest
 Truth's ark at last ! the' avenging Lutheran comes
 And clasps THE BOOK ye died for to her breast !*
 With her, the flower of all the Land,
 The high-born gallants ride,
 And, ever nearest of the band,
 With watchful eye and ready hand,
 Young Dudley's form of pride !†

fancy, that the Queen expired.—*Aikin's translation of a Latin letter (author unknown) to Edmund Lambert.*

Robert Carey, who was admitted to an interview with Elizabeth in her last illness, after describing the passionate anguish of her sighs, observes, "that, in all his lifetime before, he never knew her fetch a sigh but when the Queen of Scots was beheaded." Yet this Robert Carey, the well-born mendicant of her bounty, was the first whose eager haste and joyous countenance told James that the throne of the Tudors was at last vacant.

* "When she (Elizabeth) was conducted thro' London amidst the joyful acclamations of her subjects, a boy, who personated Truth, was let down from one of the triumphal arches, and presented to her a copy of the Bible. She received the book with the most gracious deportment, placed it next her bosom," &c.—*Hume.*

† Robert Dudley, afterwards the Leicester of doubtful fame, attended Elizabeth in her passage to the Tower. The streets, as she passed along, were spread with the finest gravel ; banners and pennons, hangings of silk, of velvet, of cloth of gold, were suspended from the balconies, musicians and singers were stationed amidst the populace ; as she rode along in her purple robes, preceded by her heralds, &c.

Ah, ev'n in that exulting hour,
 Love half allures the soul from Power ;—
 And blushes, half suppress'd, betray
 The woman's hope and fear ;
 Like blooms which in the early May
 Bud forth beneath a timorous ray,
 And mark the mellowing year .
 While steals the sweetest of all worship, paid
 Less to the Monarch than the Maid,
 Melodious on the ear !

VI.

Call back the gorgeous Past !
 The lists are set, the trumpets sound,
 Bright eyes—sweet judges—thron'd around ;
 And stately on the glittering ground
 The Old Chivalric Life !
 “ Forward*.”—The signal word is given—
 Beneath the shock the greensward shakes—
 The lusty cheer, the gleaming spear—
 The snow-plume's falling flakes—
 The fiery joy of strife !
 Thus, when, from out a changeful heaven
 O'er waves in eddying tumult driven
 A stormy smile is cast,
 Alike the gladsome anger takes
 The sunshine and the blast !—
 Who is the Victor of the Day ?
 Thou of the delicate form, and golden hair,
 And Manhood glorious in its midst of May ;—

* The customary phrase was “ *Laissez aller.*”

'Thou who upon thy shield of argent, bearest
 The bold device, "The Loftiest is the Fairest!"
 As bending low thy stainless crest,
 'The Vestal throned by the West'
 Accords the old Provençal crown
 Which blends her own with thy renown;—
 Arcadian Sidney—Nursling of the Muse,
 Flower of Fair Chivalry, whose bloom was fed
 With daintiest Castaly's most silver dew,
 Alas! how soon thy amaranth leaves were shed—
 Born, what, the 'Ausonian Minstrel *dream'd*, to be*
 Time's knightly Epic pass'd from Earth with thee!

VII.

Call back the gorgeous Past!
 Where, bright and broadening to the main,
 Rolls on the scornful River,—
 Stout hearts beat high on Tilbury's plain,—
 Our Marathon for ever!
 No breeze above, but on the mast
 The pennon shook as with the blast.
 Forth from the cloud the day-god strode,
 O'er bristling helms the splendour glow'd,—
 Leapt the loud joy from Earth to Heaven,
 As, thro' the ranks asunder riven,
 The Warrior-Woman rode!

* What difference between the Tancred of Tasso and the Sidney of England,—except that the last was of bone and flesh? "The Life of Sir Philip Sidney," as Campbell finely expresses it, "was Poetry put in action." With him died the Provençal and the Norman—the Ideal of the Middle Ages.

Hark, thrilling thro' the armed Line
 The martial accents ring,
 "Though mine the Woman's form—yet mine,
 "The Heart of England's King!"*
 Woe to the Island and the Maid!
 The Pope has preach'd the New Crusade,†
 His sons have caught the fiery zeal;—
 The Monks are merry in Castile;
 Bold Parma on the Main;
 And thro' the deep exulting sweep
 The Thunder-Steeds of Spain.‡—
 What meteor rides the sulphurous gale?
 The Flames have caught the giant sail!
 Fierce Drake is grappling prow to prow;
 God and St. George for Victory now!
 Death in the Battle and the Wind—
 Carnage before and Storm behind—
 Wild shrieks are heard above the hurtling roar
 By Orkneys' rugged strands, and Erin's ruthless shore.
 Joy to the Island and the Maid!
 Pope Sixtus wept the Last Crusade;

* "I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of England too."—*Elizabeth's harangue at Tilbury Camp.*

She rode bareheaded thro' the ranks, a page bearing her helmet, mounted on a war-horse, clad in steel,—and wielding a general's truncheon in her hand. Nothing in Napoleon's speeches excels the simple and grand eloquence of her imperishable address to her soldiery.

† "Sextus Quintus, the present Pope, famous for his capacity and his tyranny, had published a crusade against England, and had granted plenary indulgences to every one engaged in the present invasion."—*Hume*. This Pope was nevertheless Elizabeth's admirer as well as foe, and said, not very clerically, "If a son could be born from us two, he would be master of the world."

‡ "Steeds of the Sea,"—was the poetic synonym for ships with the old Runic bards.

His sons consum'd before his zeal, —
 The Monks are woeful in Castile ;—
 Your Monument the Main,
 The glaive and gale Record your tale,
 Ye Thunder-Steeds of Spain !

VIII.

Turn from the gorgeous Past ;—
 Its lonely Ghost thou art !
 A tree, that, in a world of bloom,
 Droops, spectral in its leafless gloom,
 Before the griding blast ;—
 But art thou fallen then so low—
 Art thou so desolate ? wan Shadow, No !
 Crouch'd, suppliant by the Grave's unclosing portal,
 Love which proclaims thee human, bids thee know
 A truth more lofty in thy lowliest hour
 Than shallowest Glory taught to deafened Power,
 "WHAT'S HUMAN IS IMMORTAL !"
 'Tis sympathy which makes sublime !—
 Never so reverent in thy noon of Time
 As now—when o'er thee hangs the midnight pall—
 No comfort, Pomp ; and Wisdom no protection—
 Hope's 'cloud-capt towers and solemn temples' gone—
 Mid Memory's wrecks, eternal and alone,—
 Type of the Woman-Deity AFFECTION ;
 That only Eve which never knew a fall—
 Sad as the Dove, but, like the Dove, surviving all !

ODE II.

CROMWELL'S DREAM.

[The conception of this Ode originated in a popular tradition of Cromwell's earlier days. It is thus strikingly related by Mr. Forster, in his recent and very valuable *Life of Cromwell*:—"He had laid himself down, too fatigued to hope for sleep, when suddenly the curtains of his bed were slowly withdrawn by a gigantic figure, which bore the aspect of a woman, and which, gazing at him silently for a while, told him that he should, before his death, be the greatest man in England. He remembered when he told the story, and the recollection marked the current of his thoughts, *that the figure had not made mention of the word King.*" Alteration has been made in the scene of the vision, and the age of Cromwell.]

THE Moor spread wild and far
 In the sharp whiteness of a wintry shroud,
 Midnight yet moonless; and the winds ice-bound,
 And a grey dusk—not darkness—reign'd around,
 Save where the paleness of a sudden star
 Peer'd o'er some haggard precipice of cloud.—
 Where on the wold, the triple pathway crost,
 A sturdy wanderer wearied, lone, and lost,
 Paus'd and gaz'd round; a dwarf'd but aged yew
 O'er the wan rime its gnome-like shadow threw;
 The spot invited, and by sleep opprest,
 Beneath the boughs he laid him down to rest.
 A man of stalwart limbs and hardy frame,
 Meet for the antique time when force was fame,
 Youthful in years—the features yet betray
 Thoughts rarely mellow'd till the locks are grey;
 Round the firm lips the lines of solemn wile
 Might warn the wise of danger in the smile;

But the blunt aspect spoke more sternly still
 That craft of craft—THE STUBBORN WILL :
 That which,—let what may betide—
 Never halts nor swerves aside ;
 From afar its victim viewing,
 Slow of speed, but sure-pursuing ;
 Thro' maze, up mount, still hounding on its way,
 Till it is grimly couch'd beside the conquered prey !

II.

The loftiest fate will longest lie
 In unrevealing sleep ;—
 And yet unknown the destined race,
 Nor yet his Soul had walk'd with Grace ;
 Still, on the seas of Time
 Drifted the ever-careless prime,—
 But many a blast that o'er the sky
 All idly seems to sweep,—
 Still while it speeds, may spread the seeds,
 The toils of autumn reap :—
 And we must blame the soil, and not the wind,
 If hurrying passion leave no golden grain behind.

III.

Seize—seize—seize !*
 Bind him strong in the chain,
 On his heart, on his brain,
 Clasp the gyves of the iron Sleep.
 Seize—seize—seize—
 Ye fiends that dimly sweep
 Up from the cloudy deep,
 Where Death holds ghastly watch beside his brother,

* *λάβει, λαβέι, λαβέι, λαβέι*, (seize, seize, seize).—*Æschyl. Eumen.* 125.

Ye pale Impalpables, that are
 Shadows of Truths afar,
 Prophets that men call DREAMS—
 The phantom birth of that mysterious Mother,
 Who, by the Ebon Gate,
 Beyond the shore where Daylight streams,
 Sits, muttering spells for mortal state,
 Young with eternal years,—the 'Titan-Sibyl FATE !
 Prophets that men call Dreams !—
 Seize—seize—seize—
 Bind him strong in the chain,
 On his heart, on his brain,
 Clasp the gyves of the iron Sleep !
 Awakes or dreams he still ?
 His eyes are open with a glassy stare,
 On the fix'd brow the large drops gather chill,
 And Horror like a Wind stirs thro' the lifted hair*.
 Before him stands the Thing of Dread—
 A Giant Shadow motionless and pale !
 As those dim Lemur-Vapours † that exhale
 From the rank grasses rotting o'er the Dead,
 And startle midnight with the mocking shew
 Of the still, shrouded bones that sleep below—
 So the wan image which the Vision bore
 Was outlined from the air, no more
 Than served to make the loathing sense a bond
 Between the World of Life, and grieslier worlds beyond.

* —is ἀκραν

Δι' ἡμ' ὑπὸ λῆθι κρατὸς φέβαν.

Soph. Œdip. Col. 1465.

† The Lemures or Larvæ, the evil spirits of the dead, as the Lares were the good.—They haunted sepulchres—"loath to leave the bodies that they loved."

V.

"Behold!" the Shadow said, and lo,
 Where the blank heath had spread, a smiling scene;
 Soft woodlands sloping from a village green,*
 And, waving to blue Heaven, the happy cornfields glow:
 A modest roof, with ivy clustered o'er,
 And Childhood's busy mirth beside the door.
 But, yonder, sunset sleeping on the sod,
 Bow Labour's rustic sons in solemn prayer;
 And, self-made Teacher of the truths of God,
 The Dreamer sees the Phantom-Cromwell there!
 "Art thou content, of these the greatest *Thou*,"
 Murmured the Fiend, "the Master and the Priest?"
 A sullen anger knit the Dreamer's brow,
 And from his scornful lips the words came slow,
 "The greatest of the Hamlet, Demon, No!"
 Loud laugh'd the Fiend—then trembled thro' the sky,
 Where haply angels watch'd, a warning sigh;—
 And Darkness swept the scene, and golden Quiet ceas'd.

VI.

"Behold!" the Shadow said—a hell-born ray
 Shoots thro' the Night, up-leaps the unblessed Day,
 Spring from the earth the Dragon's armed seed,
 The ghastly squadron wheels, and neighs the spectre-steed.

* The farm of St. Ives, where Cromwell spent three years, afterwards recalled with regret—though not unafflicted with dark hypochondria and sullen discontent. Here, as Mr. Forster impressively observes, "in the tenants that rented from him, in the labourers that served under him, he sought to sow the seeds of his after troop of Ironsides. . . . *All the famous doctrines of his later and more celebrated years were tried and tested in the little farm of St. Ives.* . . . Before going to their fieldwork in the morning, they (his servants) knelt down with their master in the touching equality of prayer; in the evening they shared with him again the comfort and exaltation of divine precepts."—*Forster's Cromwell*.

Unnatural sounds the Mother-tongue
 As loud from host to host the English warcry rung ;
 Kindred with kindred blent in slaughter, lo
 The dark phantasma of the Prophet-Woe !

A gay and glittering band !
 Apollo's lovelocks in the crest of Mars—
 Light-hearted Valour, laughing scorn to scars—
 A gay and glittering band,
 Unwitting of the scythe—the Lilies of the Land !
 Pale in the midst, that stately squadron boast
 A princely form, a mournful brow ;
 And still, where plumes are proudest, seen,
 With sparkling eye and dauntless mien,
 The young Achilles * of the host.
 On rolls the surging war—and now
 Along the closing columns ring—
 “Rupert” and “Charles”—“The Lady of the Crown†,”
 “Down with the Roundhead Rebels, down !”
 “St. George and England's king.”

A stalwart and a sturdy band,—
 Whose souls of sullen zeal
 Are made by the Immortal Hand,
 Invulnerable steel !
 A kneeling host,—a pause of prayer,
 A single voice thrills through the air
 “They come. Up Ironsides !
 “For TRUTH and PEACE unsparing smite !
 “Behold the accurs'd Amalekite !”

* Prince Rupert.

† Henrietta Maria was the popular watchword of the Cavaliers.

The Dreamer's heart beat high and loud,
 For, calmly through the carnage-cloud,
 The Scourge and Servant of the Lord,
 This hand the Bible—that the Sword—
 The Phantom-Cromwell rides !

A lurid darkness swallows the array,
 One moment lost—the darkness rolls away,
 And, o'er the slaughter done,
 Smiles, with his eyes of love, the setting Sun.
 Death makes our Foe our Brother ;
 And, meekly, side by side,
 Sleep scowling Hate, and sternly smiling Pride,
 On the kind breast of Earth, the quiet Mother !

Lo, where the Victor sweeps along,
 The Gideon of the gory throng,
 Beneath his hoofs the harmless dead—
 The sunlight glory on his helmèd head—
 Before him steel-clad Victory bending,
 Around, from earth to heaven ascending—
 The fiery incense of triumphant song.
 So, as some orb above a mighty stream
 Sway'd by its law—and sparkling in its beam,—
 A Power apart from that tempestuous tide,
 Calm and aloft behold the Phantom-Conqueror ride !

“ Art thou content—of these the greatest Thou,
 “ Hero and Patriot ?” murmured then the Fiend.
 The unsleeping Dreamer answered, “ Tempter, nay,
 “ My soul stands breathless on the mountain's brow
 And looks *beyond* !” Again swift darkness screen'd
 The solemn Chieftain and the fierce array,
 And armed Glory pass'd, like happier Peace, away.

VII.

He looked again, and saw
 A chamber with funereal sables hung
 Wherein there lay a ghastly headless thing
 That once had been a king—
 And by the corpse a living man, whose doom,
 Had both been left to Nature's quiet Law,
 Were riper for the Garner-House of Gloom.*
 Rudely beside the gory clay were flung
 A broken sceptre and an antique crown,
 So, after some imperial Tragedy
 August alike with sorrow and renown,
 We smile to see the gauds that mov'd our awe,
 Purple and orb; in dusty lumber lie,—
 Alas, what thousands, on the stage of Time,
 Envied the baubles, and revered the Mime !
 Placed by the trunk—with long and whitening hair
 By dark-red gouts besprent, the severed head
 Up to the Gazer's musing eyes, the while,
 Look'd with its livid brow and stony smile.
 On that sad scene, his gaze the Dreamer fed,
 Familiar both the Living and the Dead ;
 Terror, and hate, and strife concluded there,
 Calm in his six-feet realm† the monarch lay ;
 And by the warning victim's mangled clay

* The reader will recall the well known story of Cromwell opening the coffin of Charles with *the hilt of a private soldier's sword*, and, after gazing on the body some time, observing calmly, that it seemed made for long life.—

“ Had Nature been his Executioner,

He would have outlived Me !”—*Cromwell*, a MS. tragedy.

† A whole epic was in the stern epigram of the Saxon when asked by the rival to his throne—“ What share of territory wilt thou give me ?”—“ Six feet of land for a grave !”

The Phantom-Cromwell smil'd,—and bending down
With shadowy fingers toy'd about the shadowy crown.

“ Art thou content, at last, a Greater thou

“ Than one to whom the loftiest bent the knee,

“ Brand to the False—but Banner to the Free—

“ Avenger and Deliverer !”

“ Fiend,” replied

The Dreamer, “ who shall palter with the tide ?—

“ *Deliverer !* Pilots who the vessel save

“ Leave not the helm while winds are on the wave.

“ THE FUTURE is the Haven of THE NOW !”

“ True,” quoth the Fiend—Again the darkness spread,

And Night gave back to Air the Doomsman and the
Dead !

VIII.

He look'd again ; and now

A lofty Senate stern with many a Form,

Not unfamiliar to the former strife ;

An anxious passion knit each gathered brow ;

O'er all, that hush deep not serene, in life,

As in the air, prophetic of wild storm.

Uprose a stately shape* with dark-bright eye

And worn cheek lighted with a feverish glow ;—

It spoke—and at the aspect and the sound

The Dreamer breath'd a fierce and restless sigh ;

An instinct bade him hate and fear

That unknown shape—as if a foe were near—

* When Cromwell came down (leaving his musqueteers without the door) to dissolve the Long Parliament, Vane was in the act of urging through the last stage the Bill that would have saved the republic. See Forster's spirited account of this scene, *Life of Vane*, 152.

For, mighty in that mien of thoughtful youth,
 Spoke Fraud's most deadly foe—a soul on fire with
 Truth;—

A soul without one stain
 Save England's hallowing tears;—the sad and starry Vane!
 There enters on that conclave high
 A solitary Man;
 And rustling thro' the conclave high
 A troubled murmur ran;
 A moment more—loud riot all—
 With pike and morion gleam the startled hall:
 And there, where, since the primal date
 Of Freedom's glorious morn,
 The Eternal People solemn sate
 The People's Champion spat his ribald scorn!
 Dark moral to all ages!—Blent in one
 The broken fasces and the shattered throne;
 The deed that damns immortally is done;
 And FORCE, the Cain of Nations—reigns alone!
 The veil is rent—the crafty soul ~~lies~~ bare!
 “Behold,” the Demon cried, “the *Future* Cromwell, there!
 “Art thou content, *on Earth* the Greatest thou,
 “APOSTATE AND USURPER?”—From his rest
 The Dreamer started with a heaving breast,
 The better angels of the human heart
 Not dumb to his,—The Hell-Born laugh'd aloud
 And o'er the Evil Vision rush'd the Cloud!

ODE III

THE DEATH OF NELSON.

I.

'THE wind comes gently from the west ,*
The smile is on the face of day ;
And gaily o'er the ocean's breast,
The breezes are at play ;
Along the deep—upon the foe,
The sails of England bear ;
Above, the busy murmurs glow,†
Hush'd in the cabin, kneels below,
A lonely man in prayer.
He pray'd as ought to pray the brave
Before the seraph-guarded throne ;
He pray'd to conquer and to save.—
The morn of that immortal strife,
More anxious for a foeman's life,‡
Than hopeful for his own.

* The wind was now from the west, light breezes, &c. Having seen that all was as it should be, Nelson retired to his cabin and wrote the following prayer, &c.—*Southey's Nelson.*

† "The busy murmur glows."—*Gray.*

‡ "May humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him that made me," &c.—*Nelson's last prayer.*

II.

He rose ;—Before him glow'd,
 In limned loveliness, that haunting face,*
 Where, through the roseate bloom of its abode
 Look'd out the starry soul !—Celestial, thus,
 Thro' sunset clouds, Idalian Hesperus,
 Breaks on the lover, loitering by the sea,
 That laves the passionate shores of soft Parthenope.†
 The youngest-born of the Olympian race,
 The Hebe of the Martyr-Demigod,
 Never with looks of more voluptuous light
 The golden Ether trod ;
 Slow-stealing where at length from earth reposed,
 Her hero-bridegroom, as more blandly bright,
 Grew with her blush, the glory-purpled skies,
 Grim by the throne of Zeus‡ the Eagle closed
 At her melodious step his charmed eyes,
 And worn Alcides, of his woes beguil'd,
 Turn'd from the whispering Mars, and Love ambrosial
 smil'd.

III.

What thoughts were his, the doomed and lonely one,
 Feeding the last look on that fatal face ?
 Did conscience darken o'er the evil done,
 Or deem that love so deep could be disgrace ?

* A portrait of Lady Hamilton hung in his cabin. The undisguised and romantic passion with which he regarded it, amounted almost to superstition.
 —*Southey's Nelson*.

† Parthenope, the poetical name of Naples. It was in that city that Nelson first saw Lady Hamilton.

‡ Pind. Pyth. 1. I need scarcely perhaps inform even the general reader, that Zeus, in an application of Greek mythology, is a more appropriate name for the Thunder-God than that of Jupiter.

Did that sole deed of vengeance wild and weak,
 Which bow'd the Warrior to the Woman's slave,
 Ghastly and mournful o'er his memory break?—
 Mark'd he the corpse, rejected by the wave,
 Floating once more upon the accusing sea;—
 The livid aspect* and the snow-white hair;—
 The fix'd eyes fearful with a stony glare;—
 Life-like in death, the wrong'd Caraccioli? *
 Saw he the dark-wing'd Malice cower above
 The doubtful bowers of his Armida-love?
 Heard he the sighs which gentler spirits breathe
 O'er the one rose-leaf in the laurel-wreath?
 For Envy harmless o'er the laurel blows,
 But when did worm forego, or canker spare the rose?
 Away; the centered soul, in hours like these,
 Daunts not itself with phantom images;
 One voice alone is heard within the heart,
 " We loved, and we must part !"
 Yet while the voice was heard; and heavily
 Round that low cell boom'd the voice-echoing sea,
 As clouds obscure the unswerving planet,—fast
 Across the luminous spirit rush'd the Past.

* Prince Francesco Caraccioli was at the head of the marine;—nearly seventy years of age;—served under the Neapolitan or Parthenopæan republic against his late Sovereign. When the recovery of Naples was evidently near, he applied to Cardinal Ruffo and the Duke of Calvirano for protection,—afterwards endeavoured to secret himself,—was discovered in the disguise of a peasant, and carried on board Lord Nelson's ship. He was tried,—found guilty,—sentenced to death by hanging, the evening of his apprehension,—the President (Count Thurn) of the court-martial was his personal enemy. . . . He entreated that he might be shot—in vain. It was obvious, says Mr. Southey, from whom this account is abridged, that Nelson was influenced by an infatuated attachment to Lady Hamilton, then on board, whose hatred against those whom she regarded the enemies of the Neapolitan

IV.

The Boy—once more—he was the lonely boy,*
 Dreaming oracular sounds and weird, to hear
 Where the Brook murmur'd in a restless joy—
 Or asking anxious Age with wonder—"What is Fear?"
 Away, upon the Warrior Seas,
 Amidst the icebergs of the death-like Main
 Where daylight bleaches in the dreary air ;—†
 The broken frame, the fell disease
 And the dull anguish of the bed of pain ;—
 The Hour when Youth first wrestles with Despair‡
 When the far Alps of Fame, more giant seem
 Seen thro' the morning mists that struggle with the beam ;—

Court, made her forget what was due to the character of her sex as well as of her country. The body was carried out to a considerable distance and sunk in the bay, with three double-headed shot, weighing 250 pounds, tied to its legs. Between two and three weeks afterwards, when the King was on board the *Foudroyant*, a Neapolitan fisherman came to the ship, and solemnly declared that Caraccioli had risen from the bottom of the sea, and was coming as fast as he could to Naples, swimming half out of the water. The day being fair, Nelson, to please the King, stood out to sea ; but the ship had not proceeded far, before a body was distinctly seen upright in the water, and approaching them ; It was soon recognized to be, indeed, the corpse of Caraccioli, which had risen and floated, while the great weights attached to the legs kept the body in a position like that of a living man.—*Southey's Nelson*.

* When a mere child he stray'd a bird's nesting from his grandmother's house—the dinner-hour elapsed—he was absent and could not be found—the alarm of the family was very great, &c. At length, after search had been made for him in various directions, he was discovered alone sitting composedly by the side of a brook which he could not get over. "I wonder, child," said the old lady, when she saw him, "that hunger and fear did not drive you home." "Fear," replied the future hero, "I never saw Fear, what is it?"—*Ibid*.

† The voyage of discovery towards the North Pole, in which Nelson served. "The sky was generally loaded with hard white clouds, from which it was never entirely free, even in the clearest weather."—*Ibid*.

‡ "The disease baffled all power of medicine ; he was reduced almost to a

Till sudden o'er the spiritual eye there broke
 The Radiant Orb of the to-come Renown,
 And from the nightmare-sleep, prophetic woke
 Genius—which is but Hope to Action grown,—
 And hail'd in Titan crags the footstool to its throne !
 Yet ever in that high career
 What stinging Doubts pursued !
 Hiss'd Hydra Envies in his ear
 And, round the steps of bleeding Toil,
 The creeping things that clog the soil,
 And, while they cumber, wound, in thorny fetters coil.
 O Fountain heard afar—but rarely view'd,
 As the Hart panteth for the water-brook,
 So, in the burning waste doth Glory look
 For thy life-giving well, melodious Gratitude !

V.

Fast flashing, like the phosphor gleam
 Upon the southern seas ;
 Shine, rippling o'er his waking dream,
 The wavelike memories.
 'They rush'd—the triumphs of that crowded life—
 The hot Delight of Strife.

skeleton ; the use of his limbs was for some time entirely lost, &c. * * *
 Long afterwards, when the name of Nelson was known as widely as that of
 England itself, he spoke of the feelings which he at this time endured. " I felt
 impressed," said he, " with a feeling that I should never rise in my profession.
 My mind was staggered with a view of the difficulties I had to surmount. I
 could discover no means of reaching the object of my ambition. After a
 long and gloomy reverie, in which I almost wished to throw myself overboard,
 a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within me, &c." From that time
 he often said, a *radiant orb* was suspended in his mind's eye, which urged
 him onward to renown."—*Ibid.*

The Nile's avenging day,
 Aboukir's reddening Bay,
 The thunder-sceptre ravish'd from the Gaul,—
 They rush'd—the visions and the victories ;
 The swarming streets—the festive hall ;
 A nation's choral and sublime acclaim ;
 And—as the air with one orb's arrowy light,
 Earth radiant with one name !
 From these he turn'd to holier thoughts, away,
 Sad with the wisdom of the Preacher's song ;
 For he had felt how loud applauses die,
 As custom hacknies to the vulgar eye
 The Fame,—not so the Wrong !
 For Slander is the echo of Repute,
 And strikes from hill to hill when Glory's tromp is mute.
 To the calm spot in this loud world, he turn'd
 Where laugh'd the eyes too young his loss to weep ;
 Oh, how, once more, the boding Father yearn'd
 To watch one fair face in the happy sleep,—
 As, when (that parting hour) in pious care
 By his child's couch he knelt*—she did not hear his prayer !

VI.

The Phantom shapes are flown !
 As ghosts before the day,
 The unsubstantial memories glide away,
 Into their closing grave.

* Horatia Nelson Thompson, believed to be his daughter, and so indeed he called her the last time that he pronounced her name. The last minutes which Nelson passed at Merton were employed in praying over this child as she lay sleeping.—*Southey's Nelson*.

The Hour has claimed its own !
 Aloft, the hurrying tread, the gathering hum ;
 Around, the brightening sky, the fresh'ning water—
 More near and near the fated squadrons come—
 Fast o'er the dread suspense rushes the storm of slaughter—
 And the heart bounds forth from its gloom,
 Over the tides of its solemn doom,
 As the hero's bark, when the rousing gale
 Shakes the sullen sleep from its gladdening sail,
 Bounds over the roaring wave !

VII.

Hurrah ! hurrah ! from wave to sky,
 Arose the Sea-Queen's signal-cry ;
 From heart to heart electric ran
 Those words of simple beauty,—
 ENGLAND EXPECTS THAT EVERY MAN
 THIS DAY SHALL DO HIS DUTY !

VIII.

Full on the foe the sunbeams shine,
 And our seamen gaze on the glittering line,
 Thirty and three, their numbers be,
 Like giants they stride thro' the groaning sea.
 Our seamen gazed with a glad delight—
 Ne'er had they seen such a goodly sight ;
 Then they glanc'd at each other, and " Oh," they said,
 " How well they will look at our own ' Spithead.' " *

* The sun shone on the sails of the enemy, and their well-formed line, with their numerous three-deckers, made an appearance which any other assailants would have thought formidable. But the British sailors only admired the beauty and the splendour of the spectacle ; and, in full confidence of winning what they saw, remarked to each other, " What a fine sight yonder ships would make at Spithead !" *Ibid.*

IX.

At the head of the line goes the "Victory"*

With Nelson on the deck ;

And on his breast the orders shinet†

Like the stars on a shattered wreck.

For ruthless had the lightning been

That flash'd from the stormy fame ;

And only spar'd the laurels, green ‡

O'er the rents of the ruin'd frame.

"Look out, look out," cried Nelson, "see

(For so the fight began).

"How ' the Sovereign'§ steers thro' the Frenchman's line

"Astern of the Santa Ann."

"Look out, look out," cried Collingwood,

As he burst thro' the Frenchman's line,

"If Nelson cou'd, in our place have stood,

"And have been but here, the first to steer

"Thro' the midst of the Frenchman's line."||

Now from the fleet of the foemen past

Ahead of "the Victory,"

A four-deck'd ship with a flagless mast—

An Anak of the sea—

His gaze on the ship, Lord Nelson cast,

"Oho, my old friend," quoth he,

* "The Victory," Nelson's ship.

† He wore that day, as usual, his admiral's frock coat, bearing on the left breast four stars of the different orders with which he was invested.—*Southey's Nelson*.

‡ I need scarcely observe that according to the poetical superstition of the ancients the lightning never scathed the laurel.

§ The Royal Sovereign, commanded by Collingwood.

|| "What would Nelson give to be here !" said Collingwood, delighted at being first in the heat of the fire.—*Southey's Nelson*.

" Since again we have met, we must all be glad
 To pay our respects to the Trinidad !"*
 Full on the bow, of the giant foe,
 Our gallant " Victory" runs ;
 Thro' the dark'ning smoke, the thunder broke
 O'er her deck from a hundred guns :—
 But we answered not, by a single shot,
 Though our booms and the maintop fell,
 Until we were suited with two to one,
 For we liked the odds we had always won.—
 Here, to the left, at length we had
 The saint of the ocean—Trinidad ;
 There, to the right, loom'd the bulky might
 Of the grim Redoutable.
 Then out in her pride, and from either side
 Spoke the wrath of the " Victory."
 Cries Hardy, " My Lord, we must run on board
 "One of their braggarts to break the line,
 "Which shall it be?"—Saith our King of the Sea,
 (And we heard through the roar his careless voice,)
 "It matters not much, you may take your choice."†
 So the helm to port ;—O'er the bounding brine
 With a shout we burst, where the shot came worst
 From the grim Redoutable.
 As swarms of bees on the summer trees,
 Her tops were filled with the Tyrolese,‡
 And their bullets came with a dastard aim

* The Santissima Trinidad, Nelson's old acquaintance as he used to call her, was distinguishable only by her four decks.

† "Take your choice, Hardy, it does not signify much."—*Southey's Nelson*.

‡ "Her tops, like those of all the enemy's ships, were filled with rifle-men (the Tyrolese)."—*Southey's Nelson*.

Round the mark which the Brave would have deemed divine;—

Where, o'er the gentlest heart that e'er

Bade carnage cease or conquest spare,

The stars of glory shine.

On the other side of the foeman prest

Our dauntless Temeraire ;

Boarded in turn—for the ships were four,—

And the huge guns plied with a slackened roar,

As, breast to breast, the vessels rest,—

We fought like landmen there !

The Redoutable no more replied

To our guns—" She has struck," our Nelson cried,

" No pennon waves on her sullen mast,

" She has struck and the time to destroy is past ;*

" I have prayed our Lord with a Christian's prayer,

" Though our arms may win, that our hearts may spare."

Scarce the words were spoke, through the lurid smoke,

O God, we saw him fall ;

From the ship he had bid our guns forbear,

Came the murderous rifle-ball.

XII.

As down Sicilian Etna's burning side,

The waning terrors of the liquid hell

Fainter and dimlier grow !

So the spent rage of Battle grimly died

O'er the far-booming ocean's labouring swell—

But, ever and anon, the sudden flame

Shot from some flying sail,

* " He twice gave orders to cease firing upon the Redoutable, supposing that she had struck, because her great guns were silent. From this ship, which he had thus twice spared, he received his death. A ball, &c."—*Southey's Nelson*.

And the last vengeance of the vanquish'd came
 In loud despair upon the cloudy gale.
 They fly—still dealing death—they fly—the Foe !
 So lions from the circling spears retire,
 With horrent jaws that menace as they go ;
 So hurrying comets that depart in ire,
 Shake from their demon-urns the swart malignant fire !

XIII.

But where was he—the noblest son
 Of the Triumphant Isle,—
 Where—England's loftiest victory won—
 Her Hero of the Nile ?—
 Lo, on his couch, the Victor-Victim lying,
 Save to the few—the fatal stroke unknown—
 Above—his gladsome crew—his pennon flying,
 And he, with that dark Angel—Death, alone !
 But ever as the loud hurra,*
 Tim'd with triumphant peal his latest day,
 By each new conquest o'er the scattering Foe,
 Flash'd on the ashen cheek the flickering glow.
 And, like a star that pales beneath the morn,
 When gradual broadening o'er the solemn sky,
 So life grew dark as glory drew more nigh !
 Vain on that gentle heart the levin came ;
 Nor bays nor mingling myrtle there uptorn ;
 And thoughts, like echoes in a shrine, repeat

* As often as a ship struck, the crew of the Victory hurra'd, and at every hurra a visible expression of joy gleamed in the eyes, and marked the countenance of the dying hero.—*Southey's Nelson*.

Familiar memories indistinctly sweet,
That blend his England's with his Emma's name.*

XIV.

The last guns heard that famous day
Along the Deep were dying ;
No flag, save ours, within the bay
On a single mast was flying :—
When the Captain came where Nelson lay,
The chaplain by his side ;
His hand he press'd,—his cheek he kiss'd,
“ Look up,” the Captain cried ;—
“ Twenty have struck, and the rest have fled,
“ We have won the victory !”
“ Thank God—thank God,” then feebly said
The Sydney of the Sea—†
“ My duty is done,” ‡—So the race was run,
And thus our Nelson died.

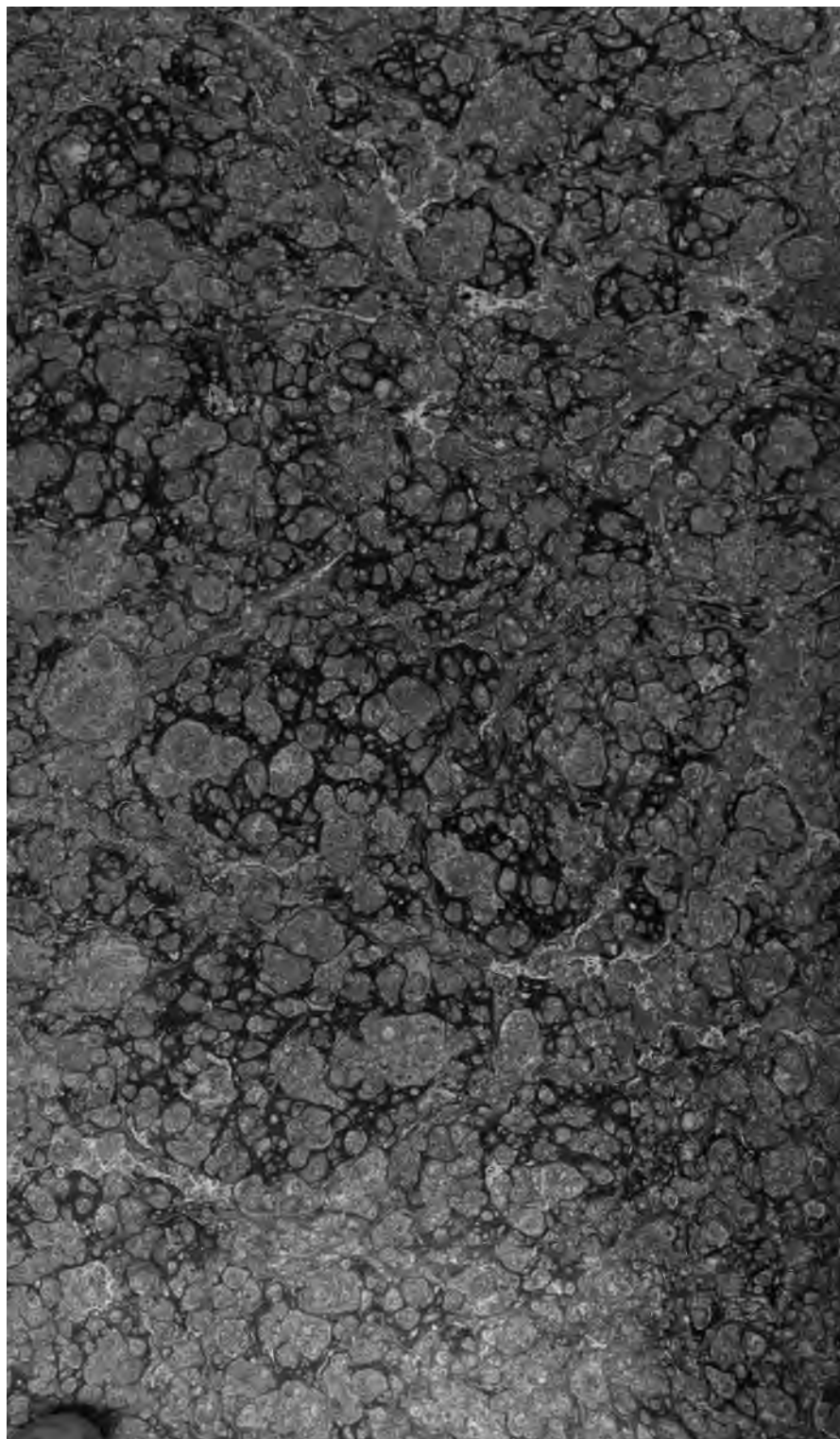
* “ Next to his country she occupied his thoughts.”—*Southey's Nelson*.

† Nelson resembled Sydney in his fate but yet more in his humanity. Each insisted, at the last, that the surgeon should leave him and attend to those to whom he might be useful.

‡ “ Thank God, I have done my duty !” These words he repeatedly pronounced, and they were the last words which he uttered.—*Southey's Nelson*.

THE END.





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